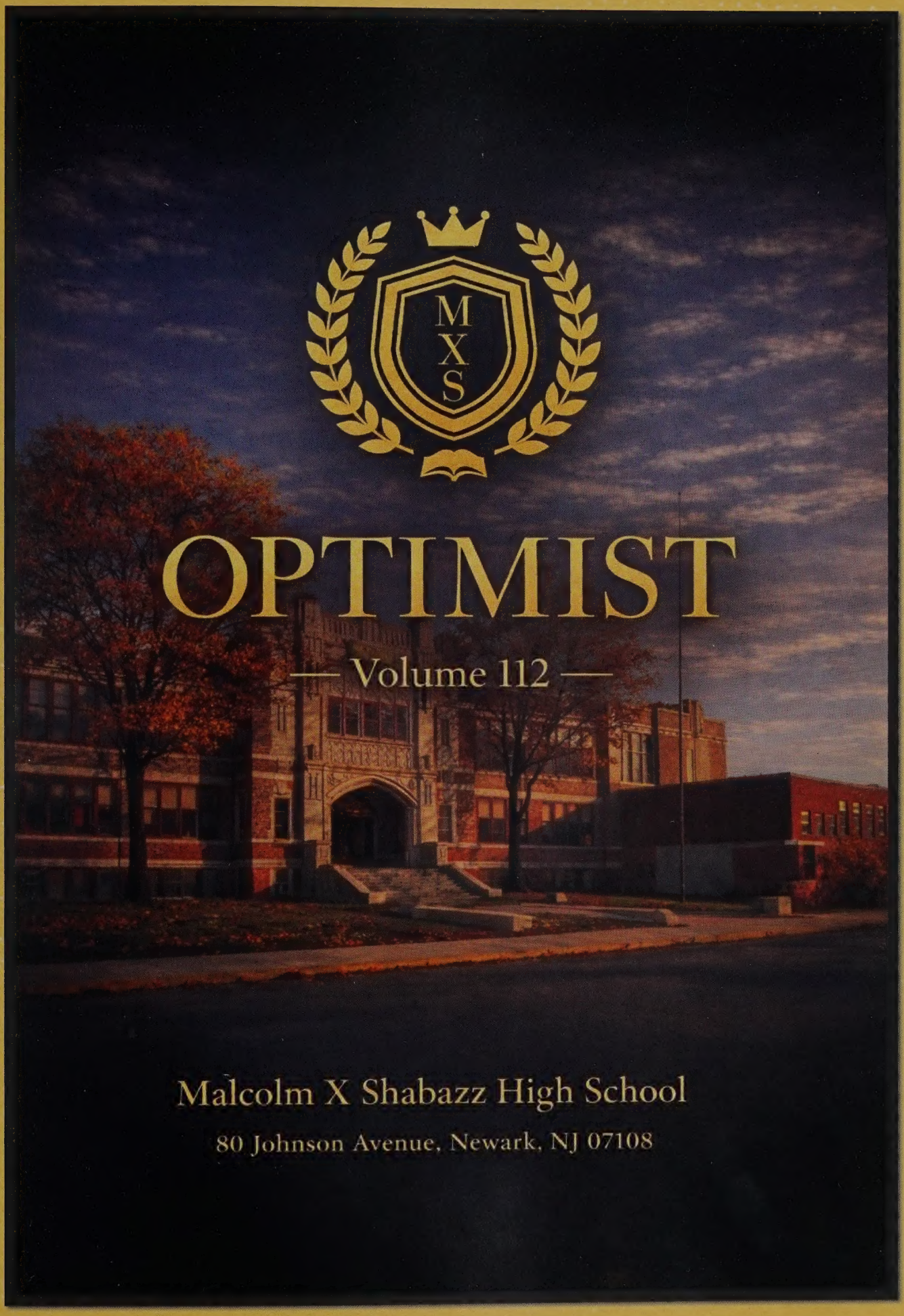
Malcolm X Shabazz

HIGH SCHOOL

2026

Optimist



OPTIMIST

— Volume 112 —

Malcolm X Shabazz High School

80 Johnson Avenue, Newark, NJ 07108

THE POWER OF OPTIMISM

A message to the class of 2026 from your Principal

To the remarkable Class of 2026.

It is with immense pride and admiration that I reflect on your journey here at Malcolm X Shabazz High School. You have defined what it truly means to be optimistic, not as a passive belief that things will work out, but as an active choice to rise, persist, and lead with purpose, even when faced with challenges. Throughout your time here, you have demonstrated resilience, courage, and an unwavering commitment to your growth. You have navigated obstacles with determination, supported one another through uncertainty, and continued to push forward with hope and vision. That is the essence of optimism, the ability to see possibility where others may see doubt. As you prepare to take your next steps, remember that your future is not something that simply happens to you; it is something you have the power to shape. Carry with you the lessons learned, the relationships built, and the belief that your voice and your actions matter. The world you are entering needs your energy, your ideas, and your optimism now more than ever. Class of 2026, you have already proven that you are capable of greatness. Continue to lead with integrity, dream without limits, and approach each new chapter with confidence and hope.

Once a Bulldog, Always a Bulldog.

In Service with Kids.

Dr. Buckman

PRINCIPAL

A LEGACY OF PURPOSE

A message to the class of 2026 from your Vice Principal

To the Class of 2026.

It has been a privilege to witness your journey—one defined not only by academic growth, but by resilience, unity, and an unmistakable sense of purpose. You entered these halls at a time when the world demanded adaptability, and you rose to meet that challenge with determination and grace. As your Vice Principal, I've had a front-row seat to your evolution. I've seen you lead initiatives, support one another, and bring energy and creativity to everything from community events to spirited competitions. Whether it was through collaborative projects, school-wide challenges, or those moments when you simply showed up for each other, you consistently reminded us what it means to be a true community. Of course, no class is complete without its unique personality and yours did not disappoint. You balanced hard work with humor, seriousness with spirit. You kept us on our toes, often finding ways to make ordinary days memorable (and occasionally testing the limits of school policy but always with style). As you prepare to take your next steps, know that you leave behind more than memories—you leave a legacy. One of perseverance, pride, and possibility. Carry that with you. The same determination that brought you here will take you wherever you choose to go next. Congratulations, Class of 2026. The future is yours—go shape it.

Mr. Lawrence

VICE PRINCIPAL

THE NEXT CHAPTER BEGINS

A message to the class of 2026 from your Vice Principal

To the Class of 2026.

Congratulations on a journey filled with growth, memories, and milestones worth celebrating. Through every challenge and triumph, you showed heart, determination, and the courage to keep moving forward. The lessons you've learned and the friendships you've built will travel with you wherever your next chapter begins. As you step into the future, may you carry confidence in who you are and hope for all that's ahead. Always remember—you will forever have a home here, and we are so proud of you.

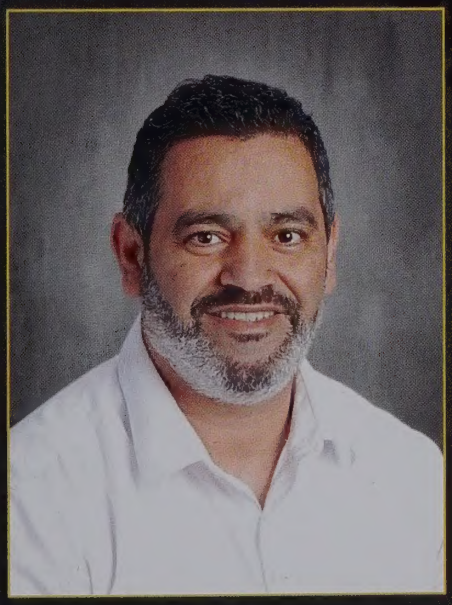
Dr. Belal

VICE PRINCIPAL

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Colon
Athletics Director
DC Physical Education &
Health

Ms. Espinosa
DC Bilingual Education



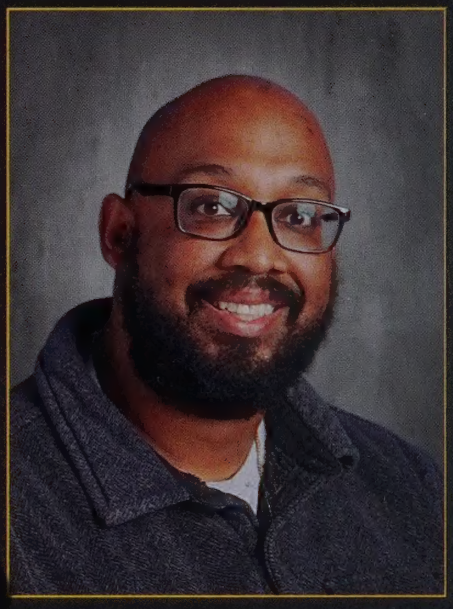
Mr. Kenz
DC Mathematics

Ms. Wilm
DC Special Education

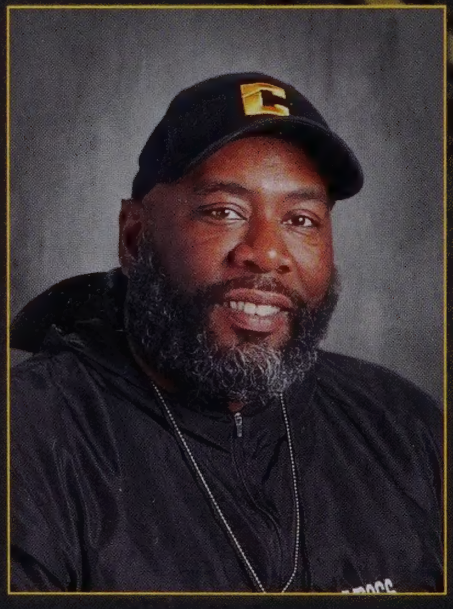
MAIN OFFICE STAFF

Ms. Hughes
Clerk

Ms. Williamson
Clerk



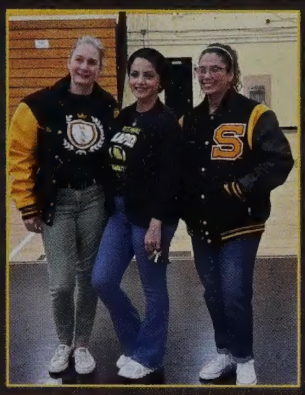
Mr. Ortiz
Clerk



Mr. Gaines
Clerk
Head Football Coach

Ms. Robinson
Parent Liaison

SHABAZZ

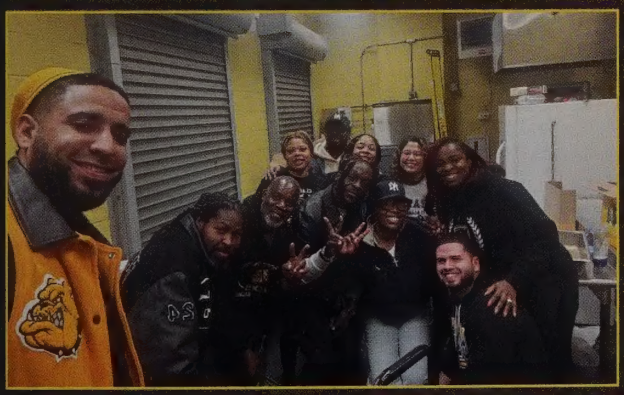


C.C

BULLDOGS

SHABAZ

Our Problems are your Problems

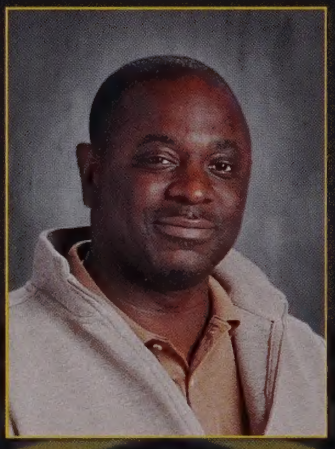


21
MALCO
SHABA

NXS

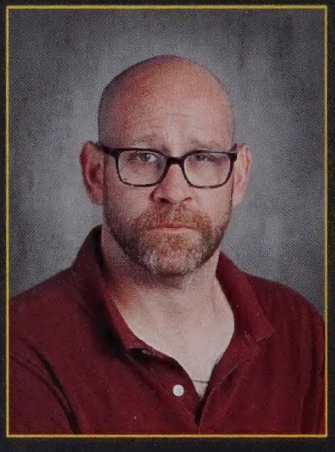
SCHOOL STAFF & FACULTY

Ms. Abdul-Hamid



Mr. Adderley-Stanton

Mr. Adeboye



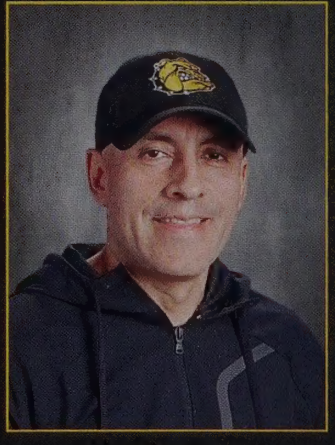
Mr. Bannat

Ms. Berry

Ms. Brown

Mr. Caisabanda

Ms. Cannon



Mr. Castano

2025 - 2026

Ms. Ceneus

Ms. Closs

Mr. David

Ms. Davis

Ms. Days

Ms. Derricotte

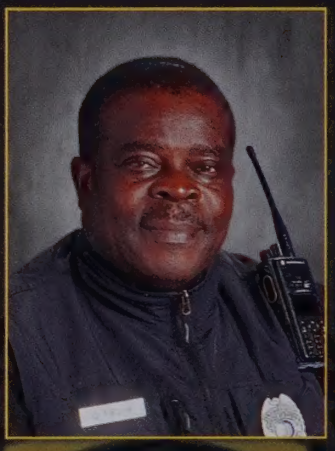
Ms. Donald

Ms. Elliott

Ms. Ellison

SCHOOL STAFF & FACULTY

Ms. Enaohwo



Mr. Felix

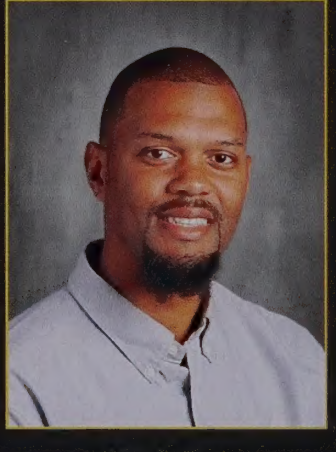
Mr. Ferriero

Ms. Floyd

Mr. Green

Ms. Hassan

Ms. Hurtado-Tabares



Mr. Hewitt

Ms. Hill

2025 - 2026

Mr. Kite

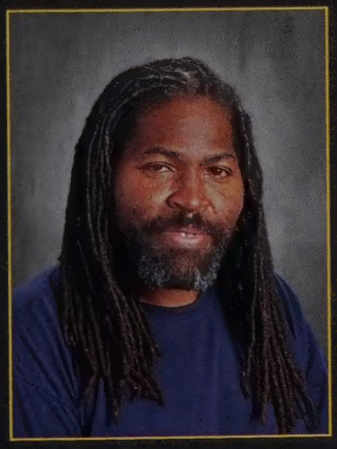
Mr. Lester

Ms. Louis

Mr. Majeed

Mr. Manderville

Mr. Martinez



Mr. Merriwether

Ms. Michael

Ms. Molina

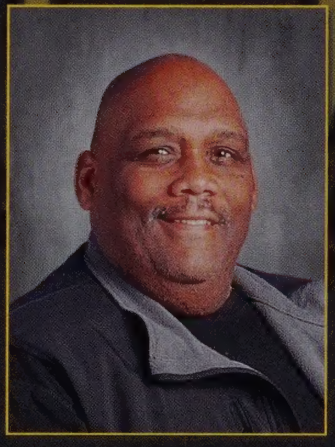
SCHOOL STAFF & FACULTY

Dr. Ndukwe

Mr. Negrón

Ms. Nwadinma

Ms. Olabimpe



Mr. Oliver

Ms. Osasogie

Ms. Peralta-Williamson

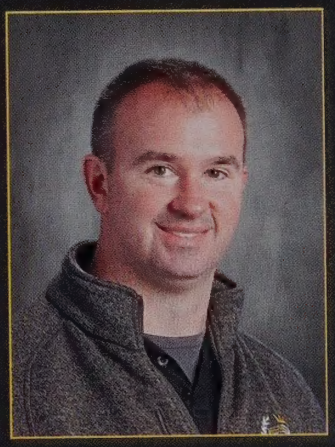
Ms. Perez

Mr. Reyes

2025 - 2026

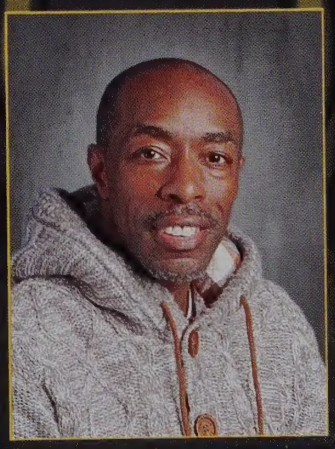
Ms. Roc

Ms. Sampson



Mr. Sangiovanni

Ms. Shahabudeen

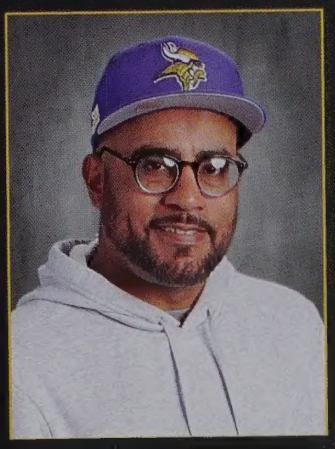


Mr. Sheffield

Ms. Slapin

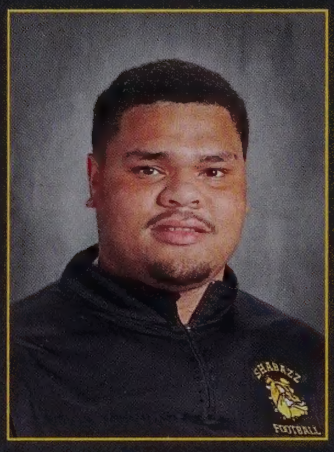
Ms. Smith

Ms. Smith

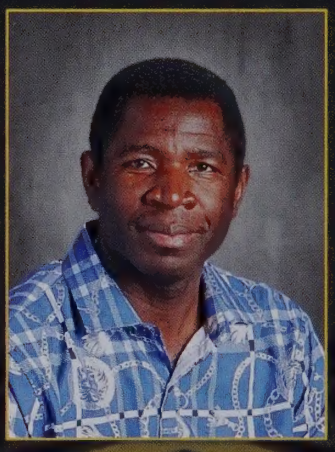


Mr. Solis

SCHOOL STAFF & FACULTY



Mr. Stultz

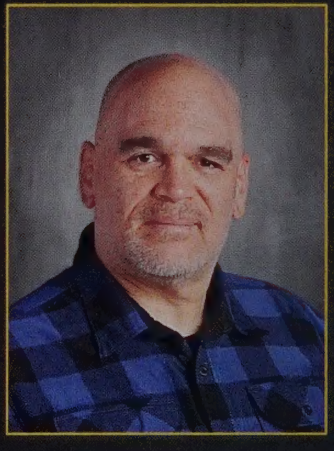


Dr. Takyi

Ms. Teague

Ms. Tripp

Mr. Tunnermann



Mr. Tweed

Mr. Vale

Ms. Vassallo

Ms. Williams

2025 - 2026

Dr. Wilson

Mr. Wilson

Ms. Zackery

CLASS OF 2026

The Legacy Continues

Senior CLASS OFFICERS

Emmanuel Akingunola
President

Lidia Hernandez
Vice President

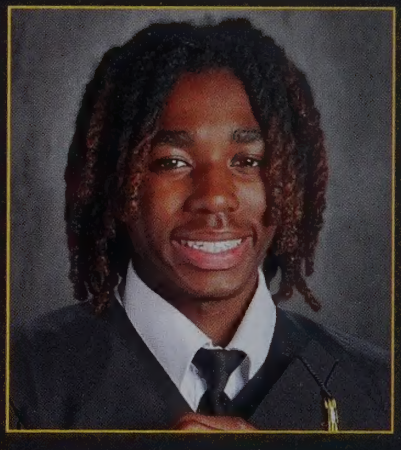
Nekiyah Smith
Treasurer

Geannah Thompson
Secretary

Bulldog Excellence:

#1. Khyla Bobbsemple

#3. Brenda Checo Vasquez



#4. Justin Parris

10 TOP

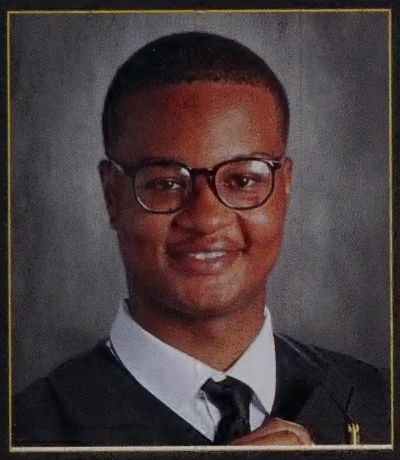
Not Pictured

#7. Zahira Singleton

#8. Zariah Azor

TOP 10 SENIORS

#2. Lidia Hernandez



#5. Jonathan Wood

#6. Kyian Simpson

#9. Emmanuel Akingunola

#10. Fauzia Boateng

Khyla Bobbsemple

VALEDICTORIAN

Good day to the graduating class of 2026, proud parents, staff, and supportive family. It is with pride that I stand here addressing you as your valedictorian. As we stand on the horizon of our bright futures, I would like to be the first to say, we made it. We started this journey as children, naive and oblivious to the challenges ahead and the world around us. Today, we end it as adults, armed with knowledge, experience, and the tenacity and wit to continue on to greatness. We have spent the last four years learning as much as possible, gaining friends and memories that will last a lifetime. To the dedicated faculty and staff, we would like to thank you for giving us the skills, knowledge, and grit needed to succeed at a higher level.

To parents and families, thank you for the support and motivation needed to persevere through every obstacle and endeavor that was placed within our paths. You were the safety net, the patient guiding hands, and the bright light we looked up to in our time of need. Now, as we go out into the world onto our separate paths and journeys, I know we're bound for greatness.

Last but certainly not least, to the class of 2026, my fellow graduates, congratulations. Congrats on making it here, congrats on overcoming all the challenges, big and small, the seen and unseen. Congrats on pushing forward and making it here, congrats on simply getting out of bed this morning, congrats on being the first, and most of all, congrats on being you. So continue onwards, and become the best you anyone could be, because no one else can be you, and you will never need to be anyone else.

Lidia Hernandez

SALUTATORIAN

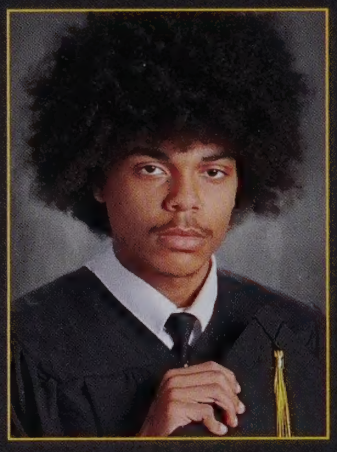
Standing here as salutatorian honestly feels unreal. If you told me a few years ago that I'd be up here, I probably wouldn't have believed you. I knew I was capable of being a strong top student, but back then my view of high school was shaped by everything I heard from adults and staff. it sounded overwhelming, stressful, and almost impossible to get through the way I wanted to. In reality, it wasn't always as hard as I expected, but there were still moments that tested me. There were days I doubted myself, and moments where I thought about choosing easier paths. The truth is, the journey here wasn't perfect, and I think that's what makes it meaningful.

This class knows what it means to push through. We've had early mornings, late nights, stress, doubt, and moments where we questioned ourselves. But we also had laughter, friendships, and memories that made it all worth it. Somewhere between the pressure and the progress, we grew. And being salutatorian doesn't mean I had it all figured out, it means I kept showing up, even when it would've been easier not to. One thing I've learned is that success isn't just measured by grades or titles. It's measured by growth. It's about becoming someone stronger, more patient, and more aware of your own potential than you were when you started. Every single person here has grown in their own way, and that growth matters just as much as any award.

To my classmates, thank you. You made this journey what it was. Whether we talked everyday or just crossed paths in the hallway, you were part of my experience.

As we move forward, things will change. Some of us will stay close, and others will go in completely different directions. That's life. But what we take with us is what we've built here: the work, the resilience, and the way we learned to keep going even when things felt heavy. So as we step into whatever comes next, don't be afraid to take risks or follow what actually matters to you. Where you start doesn't define where you end up, and this chapter is just one part of the story. I'm grateful for this moment, not just for the title, but for everything it represents and everything it took to get here. Thank you, and congratulations to the Class of 2026!

SENIORS

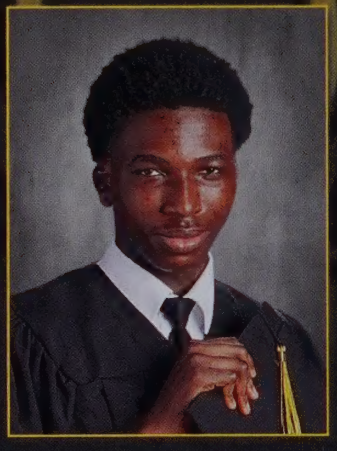


Misael Acevedo

Carlos Acosta

Ayomiposi Adejumo

Emmanuel Akingunola



Daniel Akinwunmi

Sekya Alexander

Priscilla Amponsah

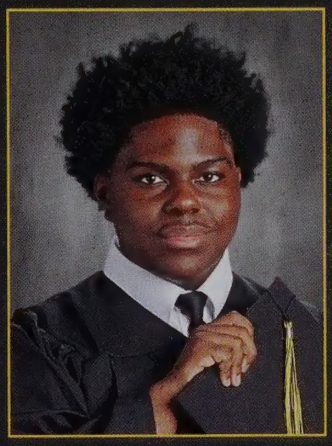
Alana Arrington-Tucker

Zariah Azor

CLASS OF 2026

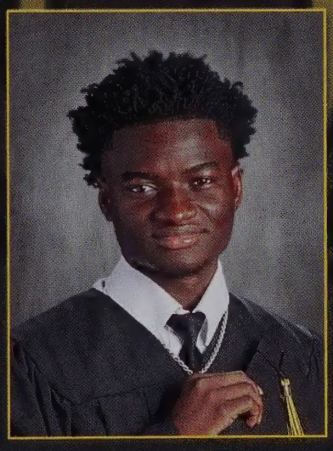
Rihana Bailey

Chanylah Ballard

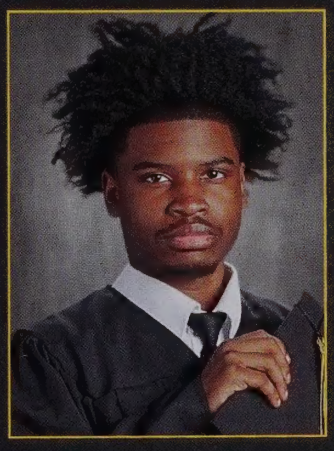


Ibn Barber

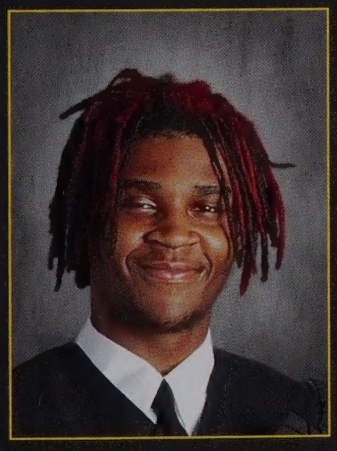
Zaim Barnes



Barry Imoro

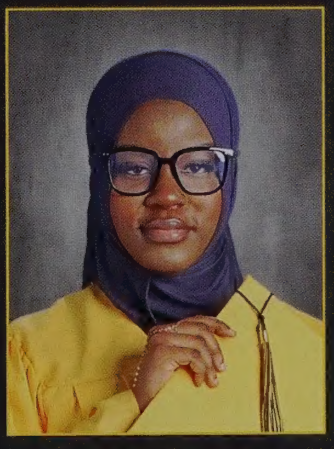


Sincere Berry



Talik Blackwell

Destiny Blount

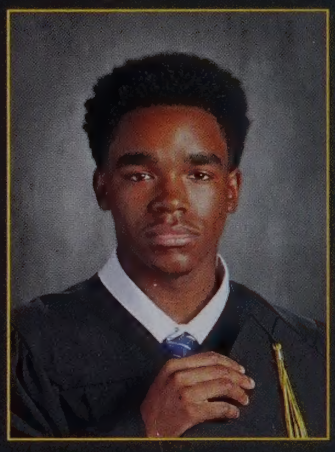


Fauzia Boateng

SENIORS

Khyla Bobbsemple

Iniyah Boyd



Antwan Brown

Raymond Brown

Trayshawn Butler

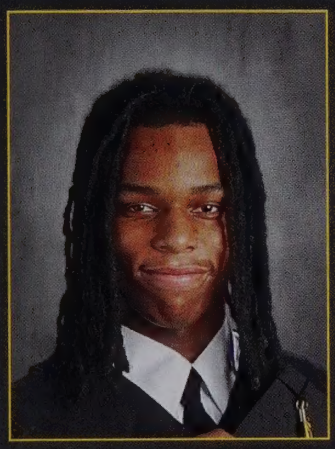
Eric Camacho

Flor Camas

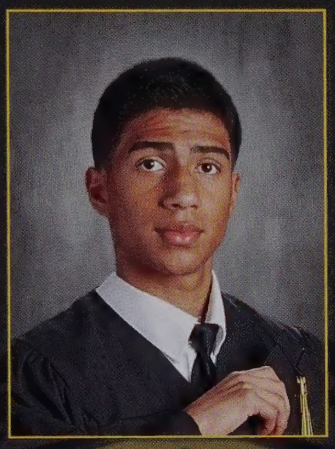
Riccardo Cave

Brenda Checo Vasquez

CLASS OF 2026



Rayquan Clark

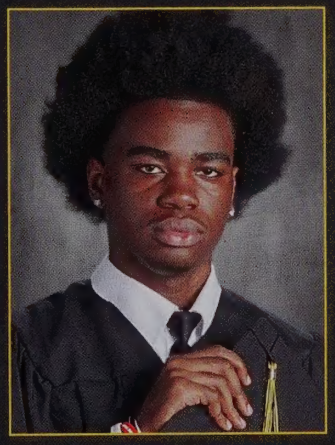


Justin Cordova Mendoza

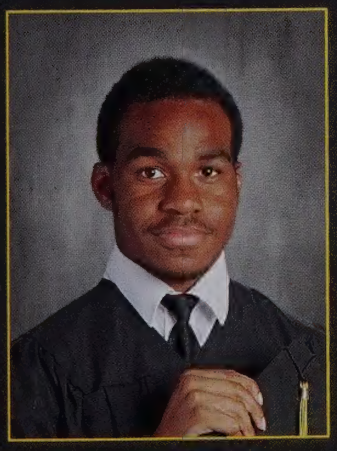
Alina Correa

Omari Crumpe

Emilio Cruz



Roshaun Cummings



Malachi Dawes

Leslie De La Cruz

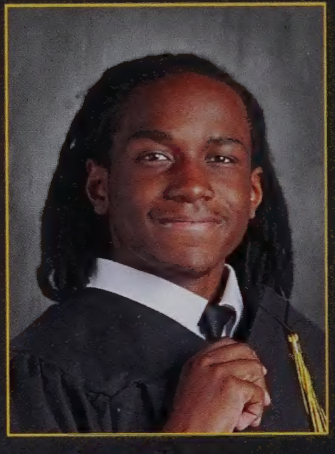
Estefany De Souza Rocha

SENIORS

Stephanie Derois

Fanta Diallo

Israel Diaz



Amir Duprey

Alero Erueyin

Shajadae Ewell

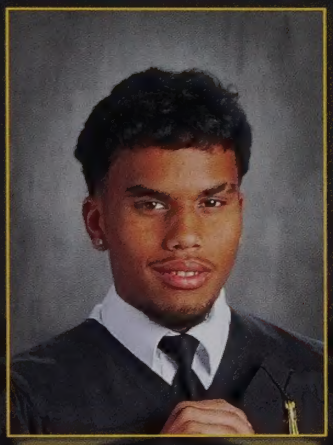
Teshawna Flowers

Noah Foxworth

Amir Gaston

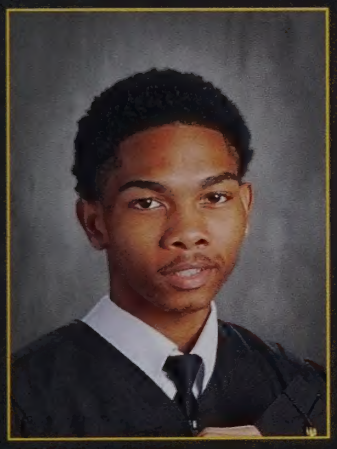
CLASS OF 2026

Karen Genao

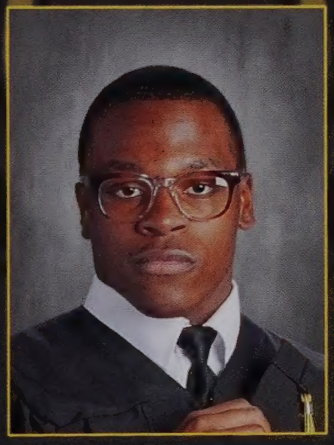


Christopher Marin Gonzalez

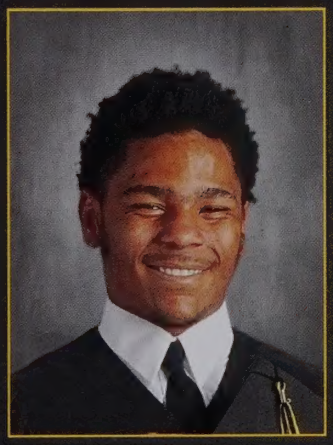
Christian Gray



David Harris



De'Vonta Harris



Marcus Harris

Skyla Harris

Lidia Hernandez

Qua'yad Jackson

SENIORS

Za'niya Jackson

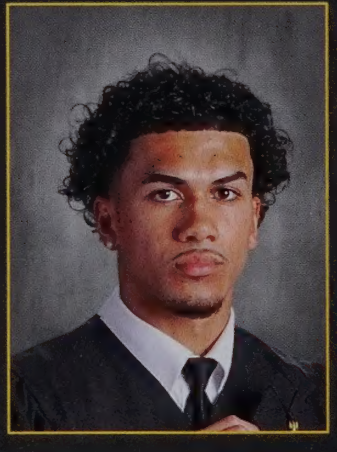
Quasiyah Jones

Nyleah King

Koita Madigata

Abdoul Konvolbo

Kaylani Lacewell



Danny Lambertus

Kevine Langbin

Steven Dutan Lazo

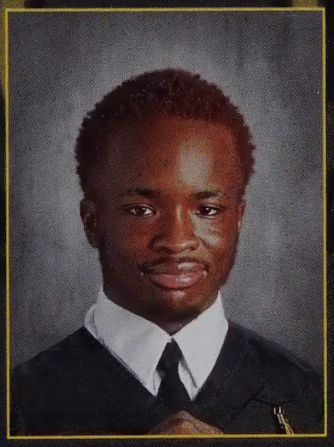
CLASS OF 2026

Jayla Louissaint

James Luciano

Khamiyyah Martin

Akaila Maxwell



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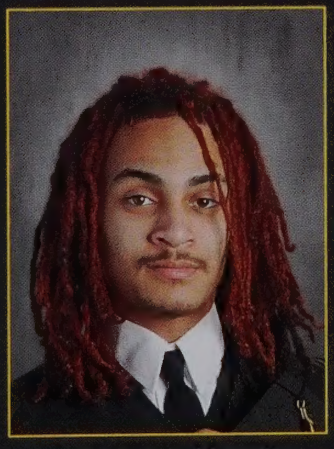
Zaiden McDonald

Malachi McNeil



Jeremy Morillo

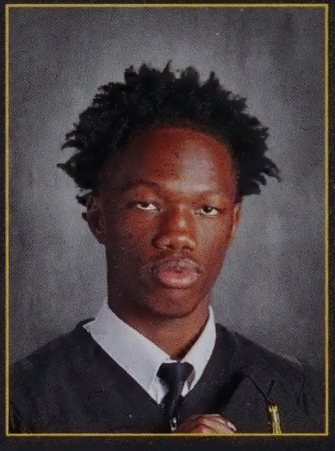
Adora Morris

SENIORS

Brandon Nunez

Jan-Carlos Oms

Yoriana Ortiz



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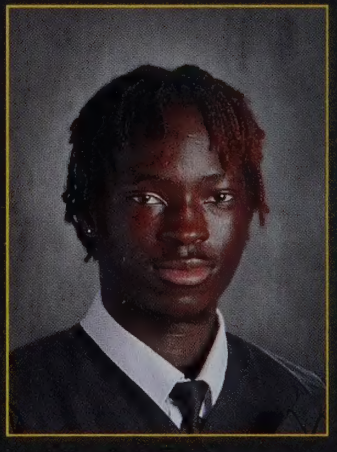
Janya Paige

Esther Paintsil

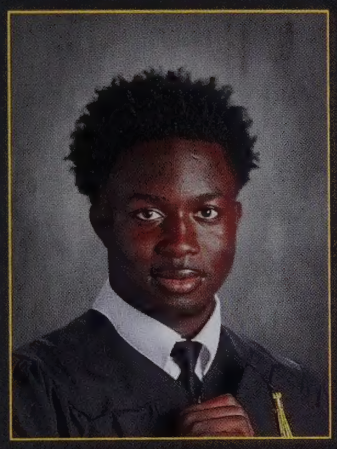
Justin Parris

Messiah Pettiford



Khalid Raheem

CLASS OF 2026

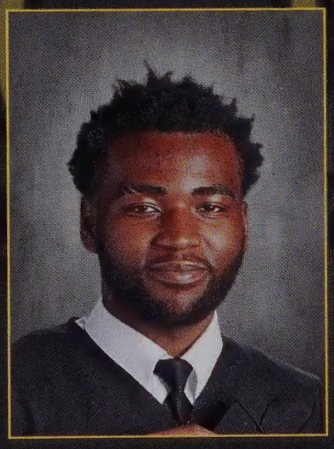


Basit Raimi

Danna Duran Ramirez

Za'yajah Rasberry

Nasir Reese



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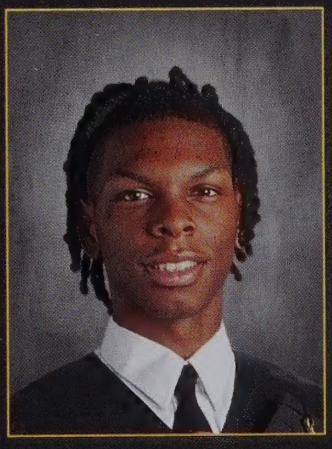
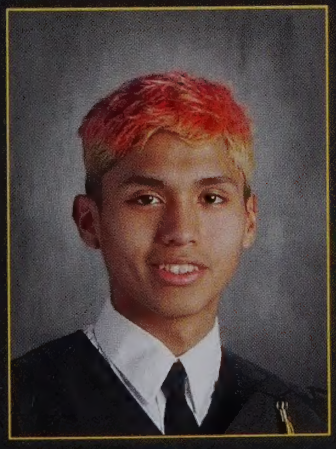
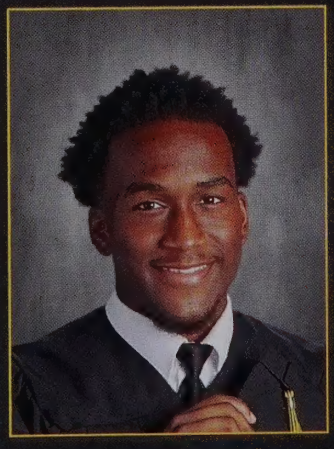


Jayden Robinson



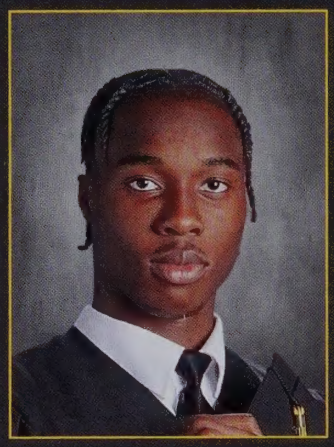
Leonardo Salas Rodriguez



Isaiah Romain

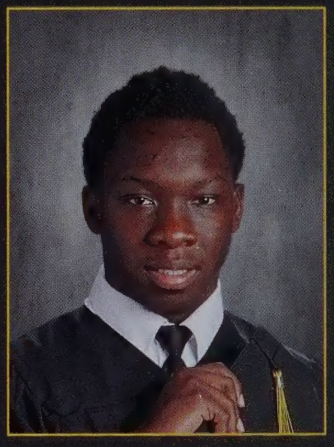
Leyana Sanderson-Green

SENIORS

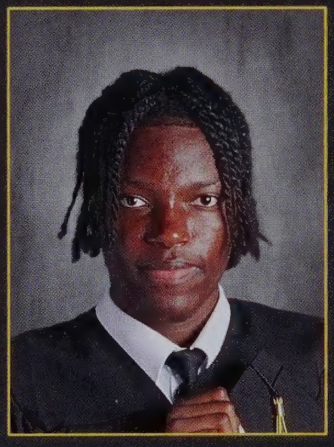


Umar Sannor

Juliany Santana



Muhammed Sillah

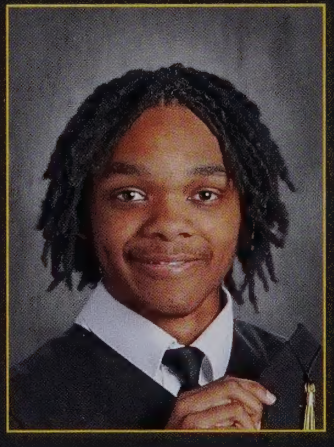


Kyian Simpson

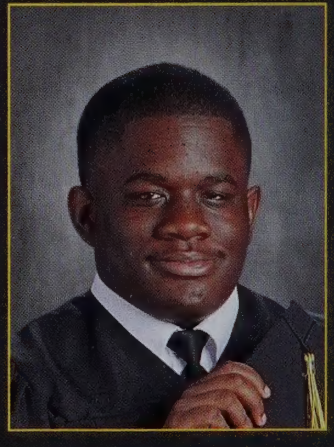
Ke'Aizah Smith

Nekiyah Smith

Janella Speed

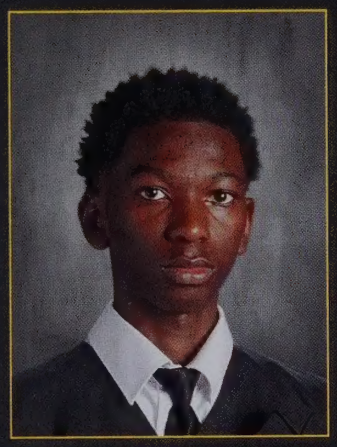


Rahmir Standifer



Al-Juwan Stokley

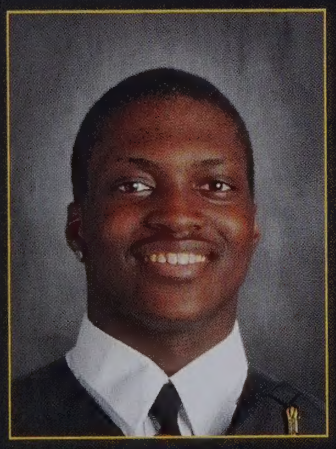
CLASS OF 2026



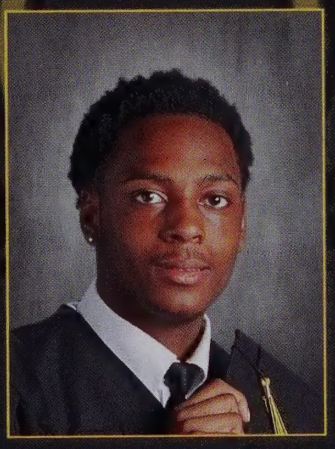
Moussa Tall

Geannah Thompson

Sanaa Thompson

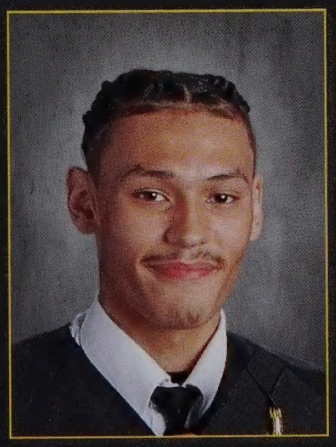


Quamir Towns

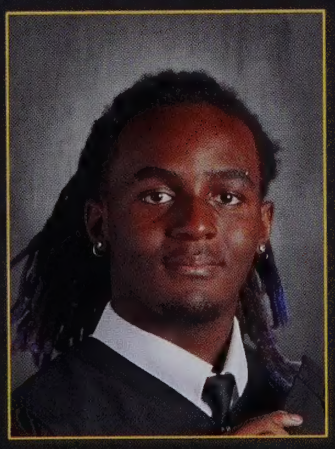


Haulelio Townsend

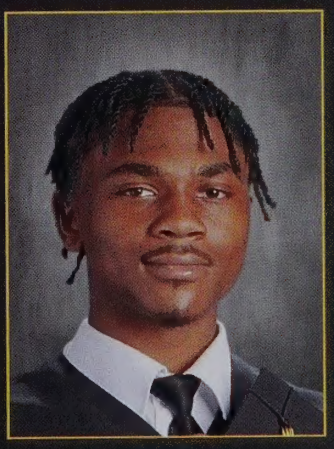
Jaimayah Tucker



Manuel Vega



Robert Walker



Sybir White

SENIORS

Kimani Williams

Jonathan Wood

Shayla Zachary

Sanaii Alexander

Fulgence Atse

Nasir Auls

Adriana Hamilton

Promise Mills

Sherifatu Otoo

CLASS OF 2026

Jerado Rattler Jr.

Andy Santander Santander

Nashla Segura Montero

Zahira Singleton

Zakira Singleton

Charlange Stavien

Armoni Turner

Kylah West

Shamir Young

THE CLASS

OF 2026

DECISION MADE. FUTURE SET.

National College Decision Day | Class of 2026

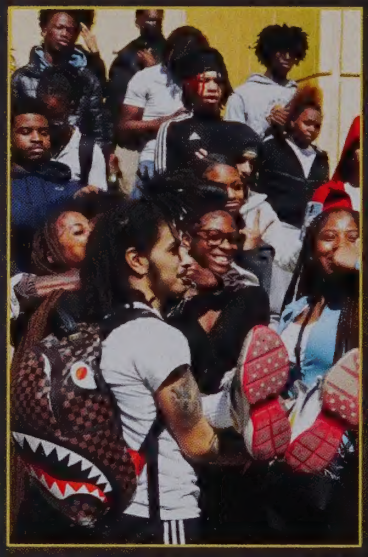
ESSEX COUNTY CHAMPIONS
M. X SHABAZZ FOOTBALL
20 24
NORTH JERSEY SECTION 1 GROUP 2 REGIONAL CHAMPIONS
MCDONALD CONFERENCE BOYS BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS 1988

The choices are in and the paths are set, as acceptance letters turn into commitments and the Class of 2026 steps confidently into their next chapter ready to take on new challenges and opportunities.

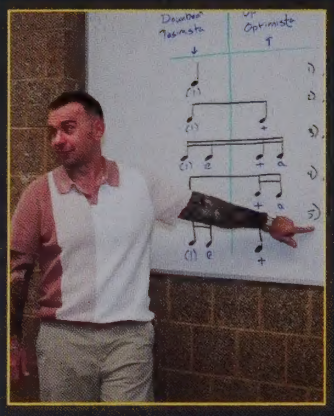
ESSEX
COUNTY COLLEGE
STUDENTS FIRST
RUTGERS
SETON HALL
UNIVERSITY
FORTIS
TEMPLE
OWLS
EST 1884
TEMPLE
UNIVERSITY
Berkeley
College
LINCOLN TECH
FORTIS
Felician
UNIVERSITY
THE FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
BLOOMFIELD
COLLEGE
KEAN
Berkeley
College
BLOOMFIELD
COLLEGE
LINCOLN TECH

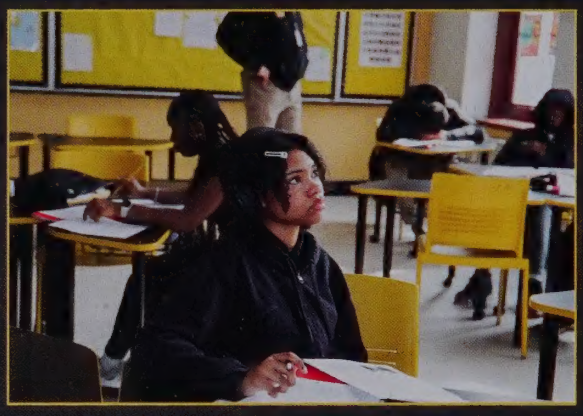
LINCOLN TECH
KEAN
NJIT MAKES
LINCOLN TECH
Berkeley College
U.S. ARMY
FORTIS
LINCOLN TECH
Berkeley College
SETON HALL
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
LINCOLN TECH
Malcolm X Shabazz High School

Once a BULLDOG

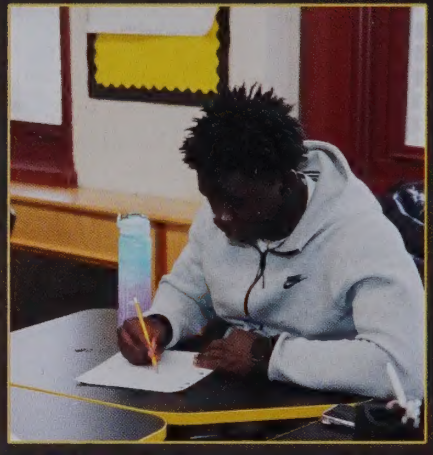


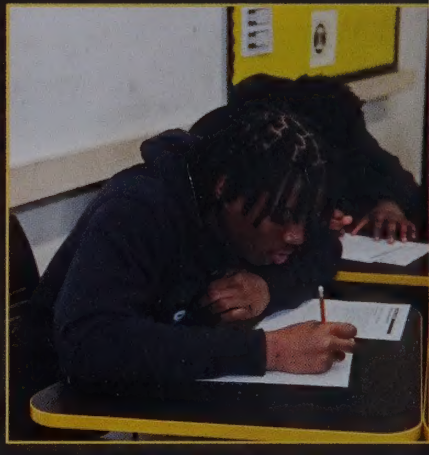
Always a BULLDOG

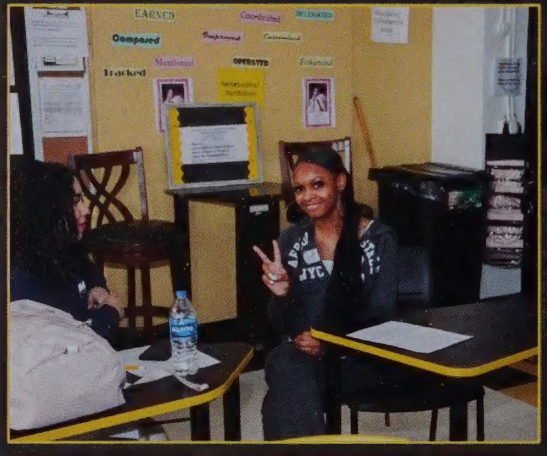


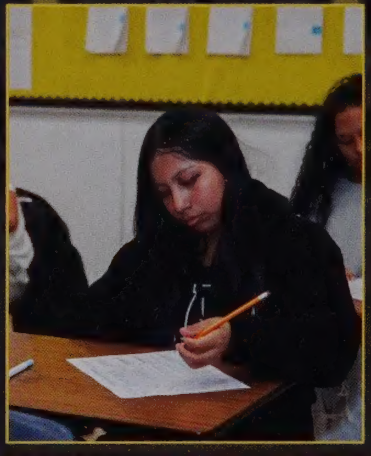


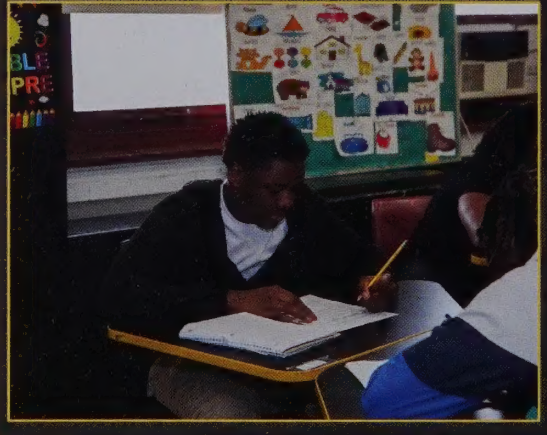
THROUGH THE LENS CLASSROOM CANDIDS

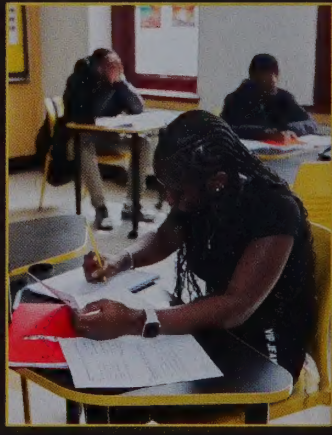


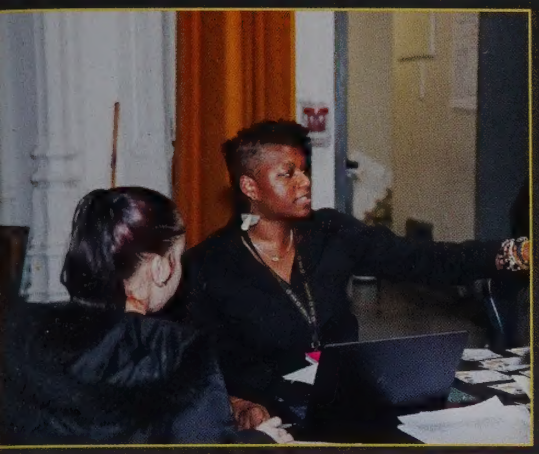


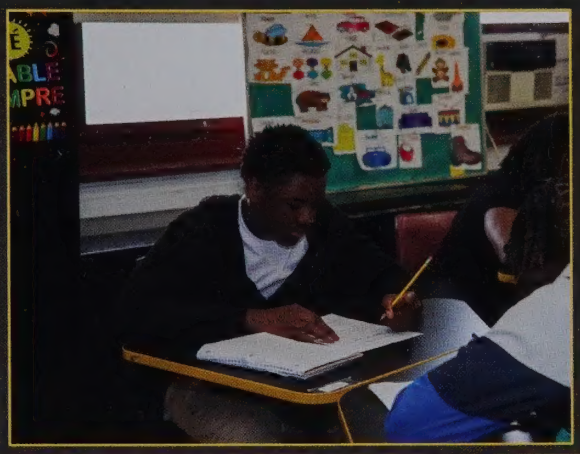


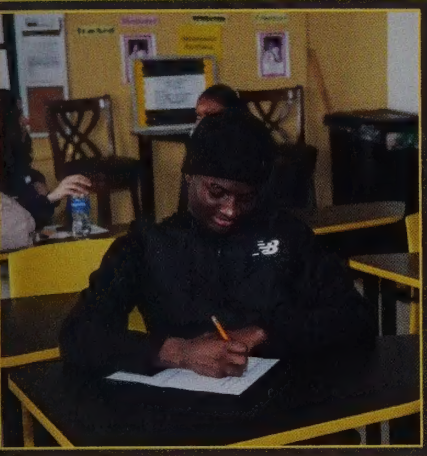


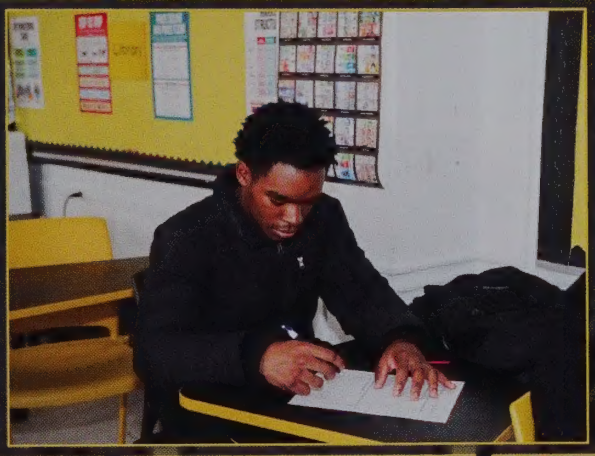


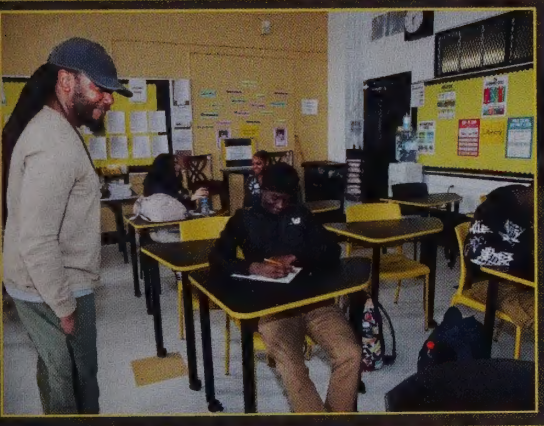


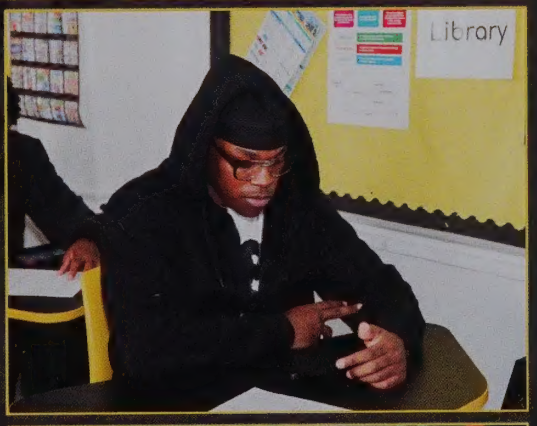


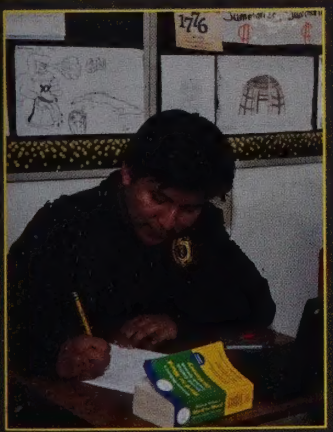


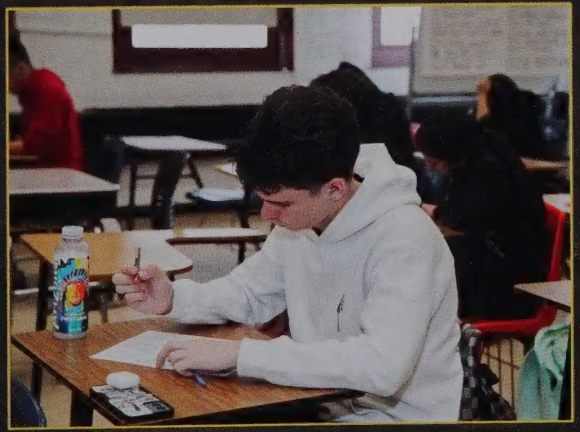


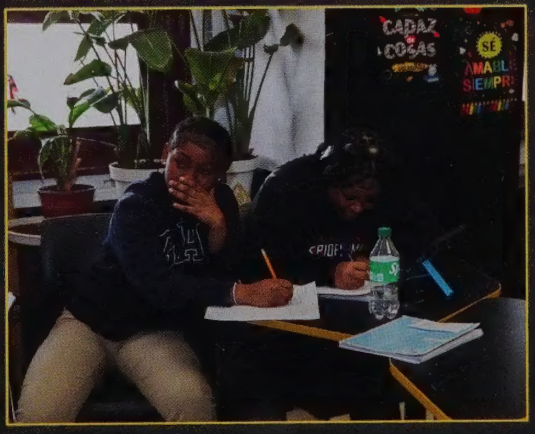






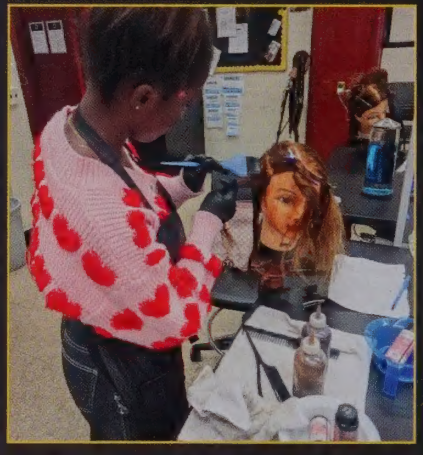


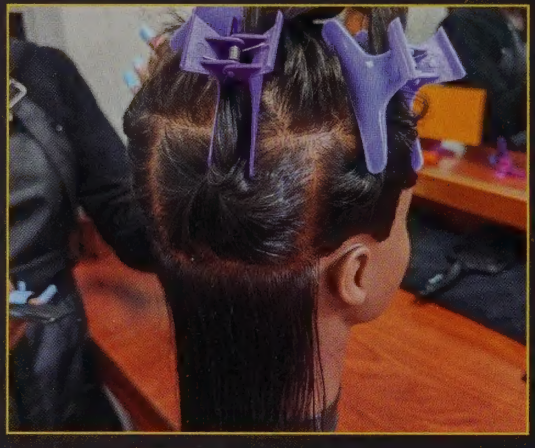


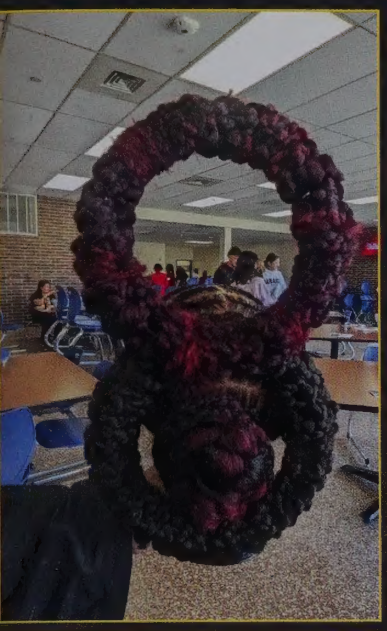


"Every Student, Every Day, Every Opportunity"

COSMETOLOGY

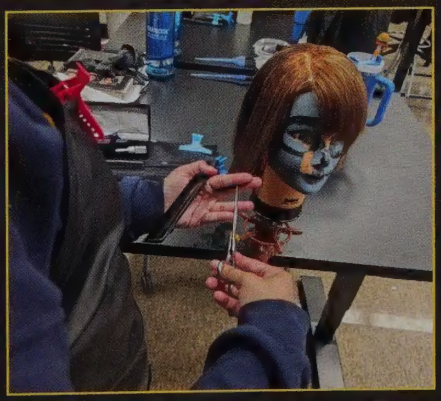






Back 2
Life

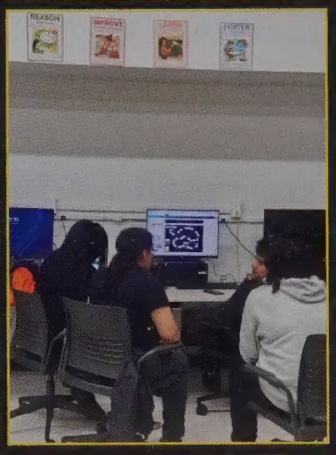
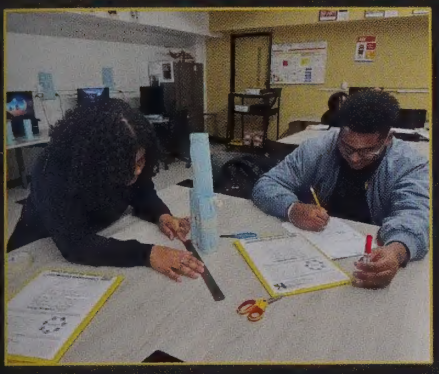
Braids
Braids
Braids
Braids

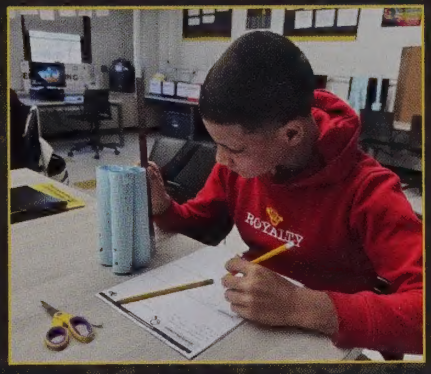


CONGRATULATIONS, ZARIAH!
MXS
MXS
We are proud to announce that **Zariah Azor** has successfully ***passed the New Jersey State Board of Cosmetology & Hairstyling Licensing Exam.***
Zariah is the ***first*** student at Malcolm X Shabazz High School to achieve this milestone during the 2025–2026 academic school year.
Her accomplishment marks an exciting step forward for our thriving cosmetology program and reflects her dedication, hard work, and commitment to excellence.
Congratulations, Zariah!

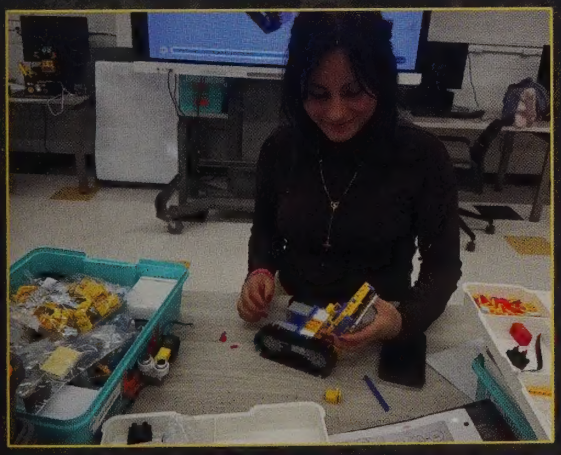
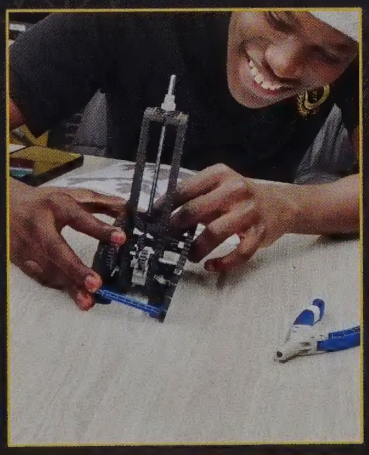
TAKING LEARNING TO NEW HEIGHTS

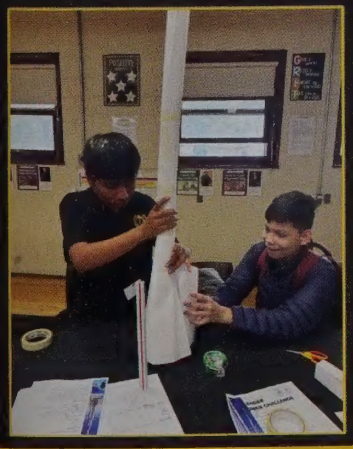
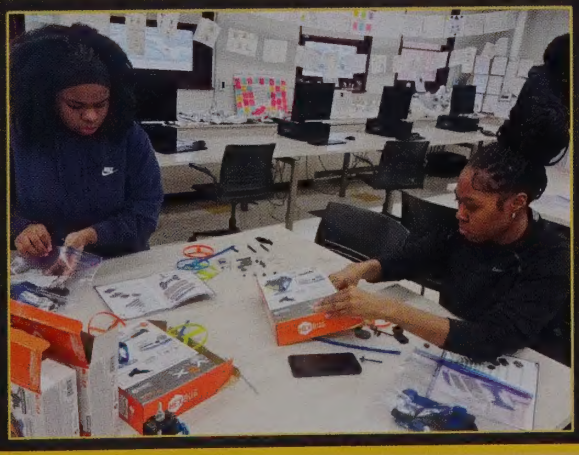
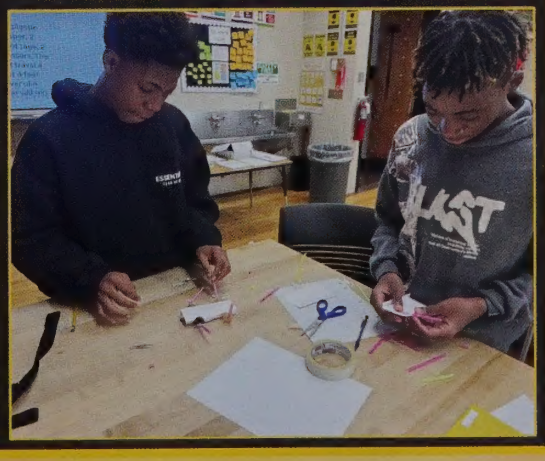
Students brought engineering and math to life at iFLY, experiencing lift and motion firsthand in the wind tunnel. This hands-on trip deepened their understanding of STEM concepts while showing how learning extends beyond the classroom.

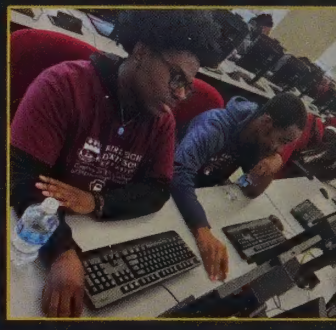


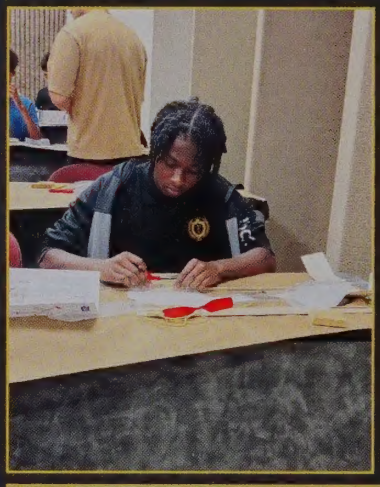
DESIGN. BUILD. SOLVE.

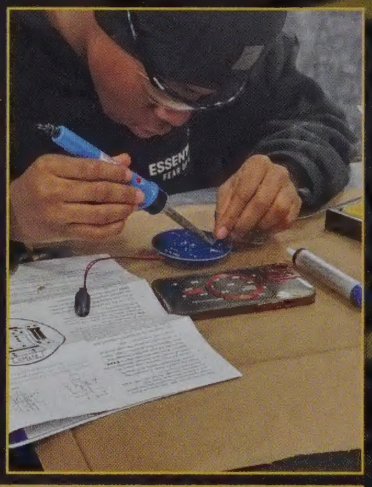



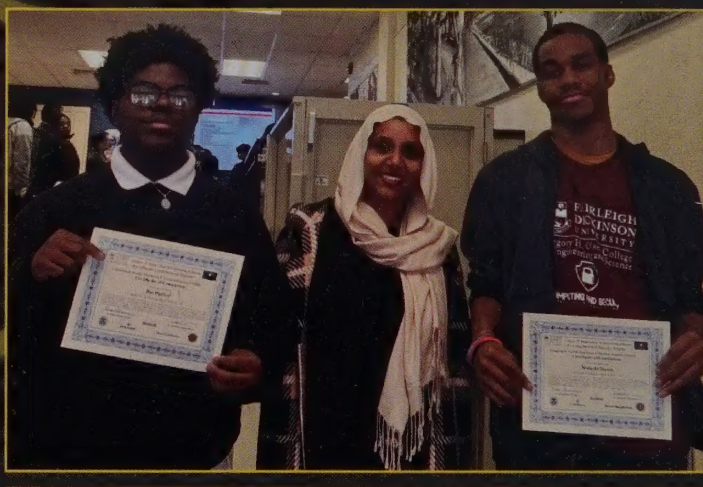




ENGINEERING OUR FUTURE

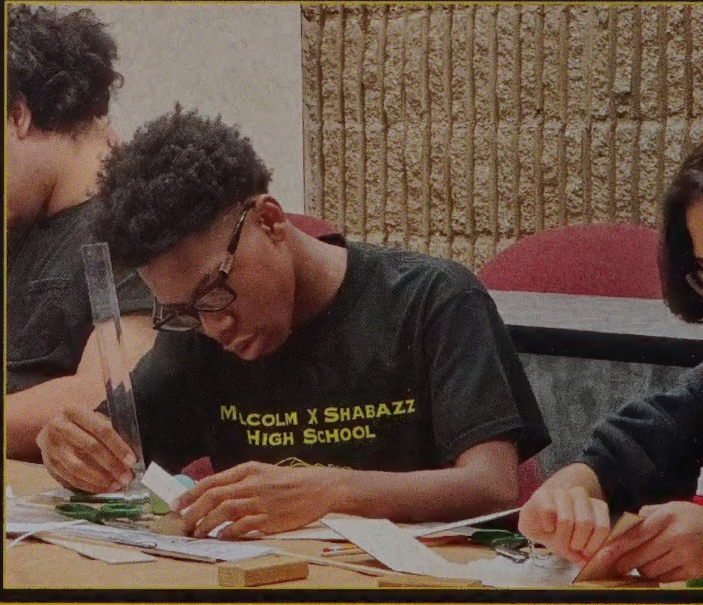




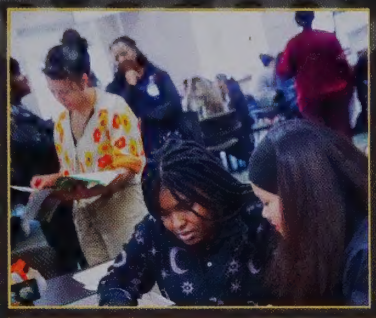




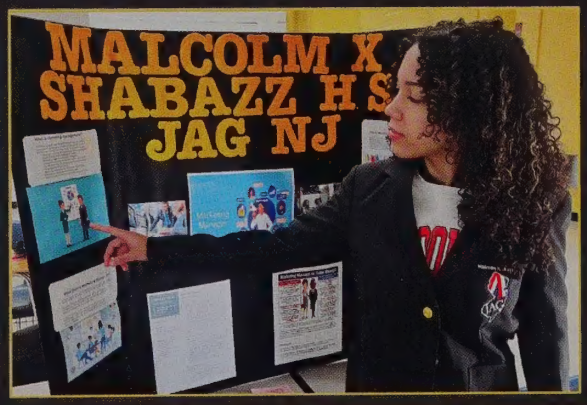
Dr. Erdal Kose, Deputy Director, CSEOP
Lecturer of Computer Science
Gregory H. Olsen College of Engineering and Science
Olsen Foundation
EMERSON

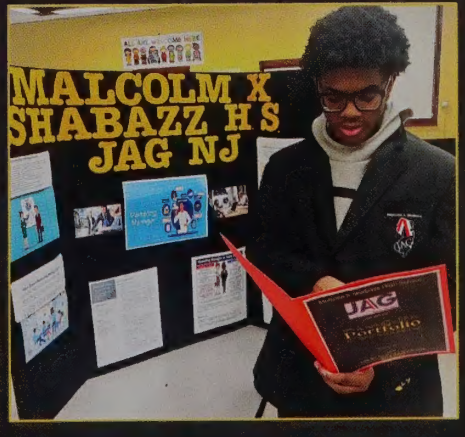


TECH MINDS AT WORK



JAG: BUILDING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

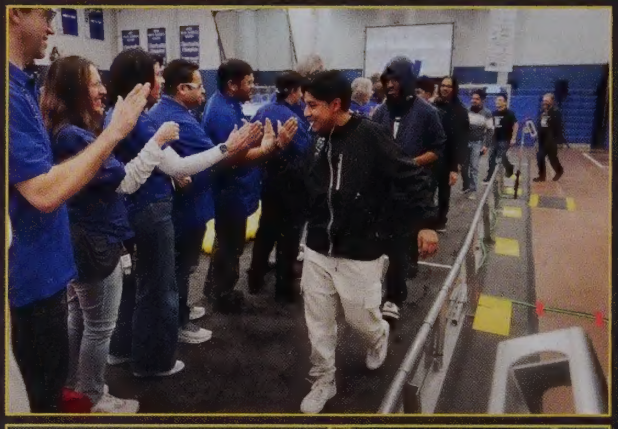




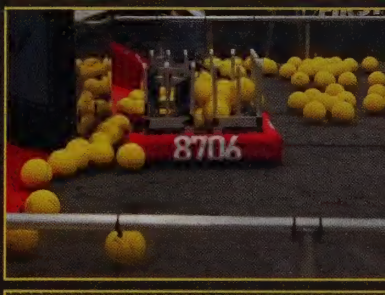
JAG (Jobs for America's Graduates) brings learning to life as students step beyond the classroom and into their future. Through hands-on activities, teamwork, and real-world experiences, students build confidence, sharpen career skills, and take ownership of their goals—preparing to succeed in college, careers, and beyond.

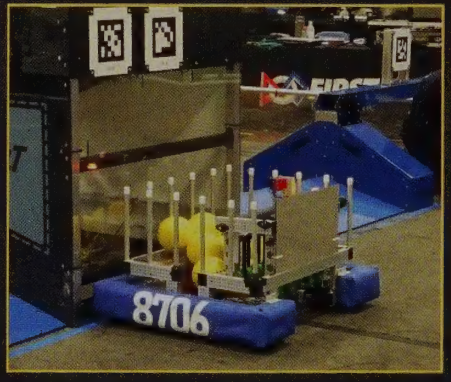
CAREER READY. LIFE READY.

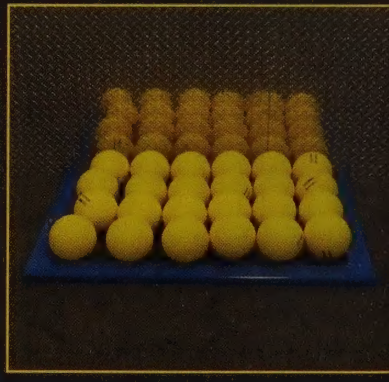
SHABAZZ BULLDOG BOTS

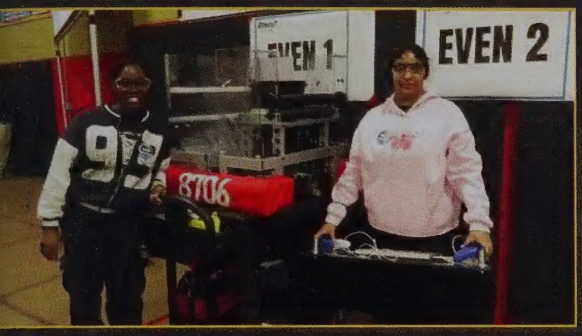


The MXS Bulldog Bots earned the Rising All-Star Award for their resilience and determination. Through challenges, they grew into a strong family, breaking barriers in STEM and proving they are a pack ahead of the rest.



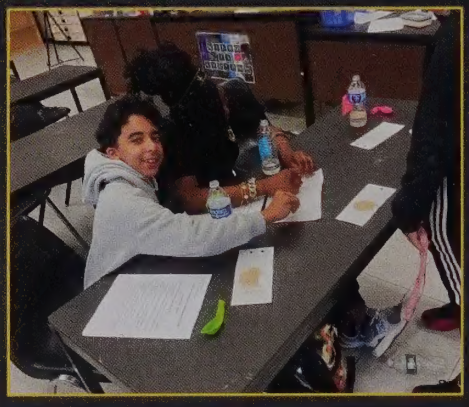




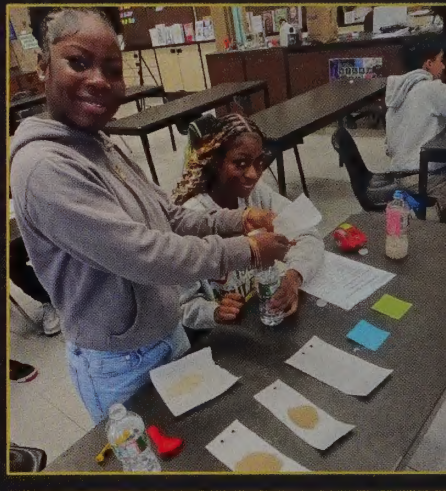


It was a historic moment for the Malcolm X Shabazz Bulldog Bots as they captured first place at the Mount Olive District Event, earning a spot in the regional championship. Competing with precision and purpose, the team also secured the Autonomous Award for their robot's consistent, high-level performance during autonomous match play. Through innovation, teamwork, and dedication, the Bulldog Bots proved that excellence isn't accidental—it's engineered.

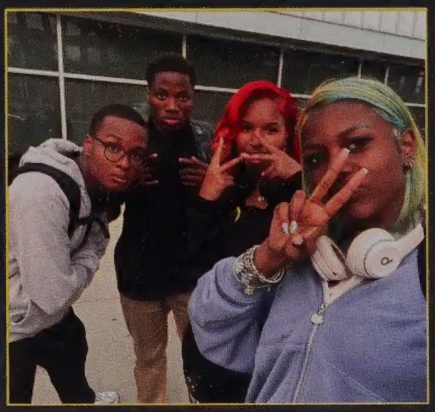
LAB DAYS & BRIGHT MINDS

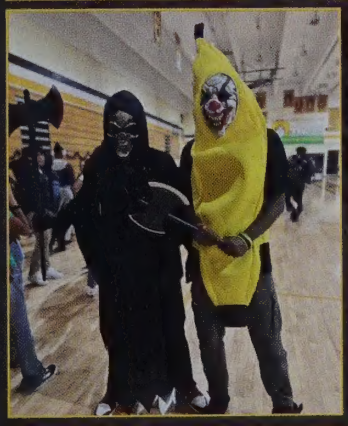


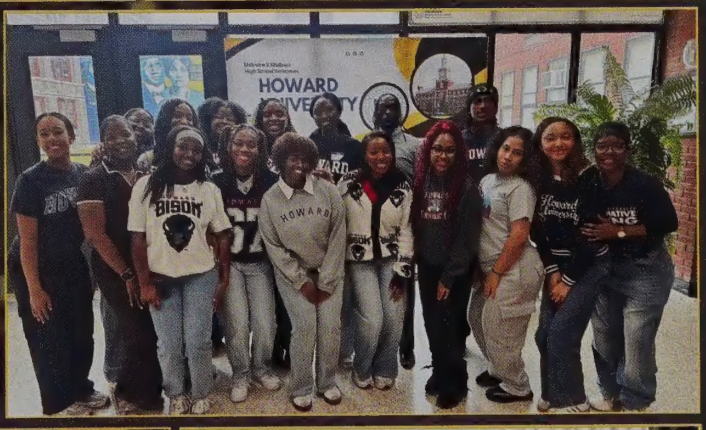
Beakers bubbling, notes scattered, and ideas constantly in motion—this is what science looked like across these moments. Across classrooms and lab spaces, students brought science to life through hands-on learning and collaboration. From experimenting with materials to observing reactions and analyzing results, each moment captured reflects curiosity, teamwork, and critical thinking in action. These experiences go beyond the textbook, allowing students to explore, question, and discover in real time. Whether working independently or side by side, Shabazz scholars continue to embrace the process of learning through exploration—proving that science is not just studied, but experienced.

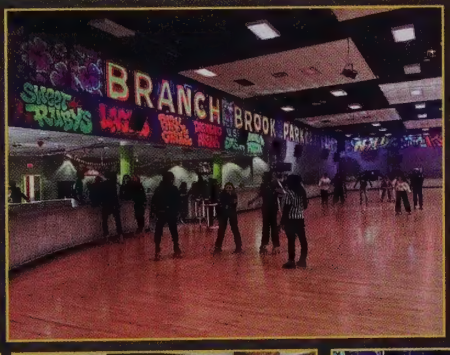


BULLDOG LIFE









THE MARCH

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BAND
NEW JERSEY
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ING BAND

SENIORS

THE SOUND

As the Class of 2026 takes its final bow, these senior members of the marching band leave behind a legacy of sound, spirit, and dedication. From powerful performances to unforgettable moments on and off the field, they have set the tone for excellence and pride. Their rhythm, leadership, and presence will continue to echo long after the final note.

BULLDOGS

THE SPIRIT

As seniors, they didn't just perform—they led. With every routine and every appearance, they set the standard for confidence, pride, and unity. Their impact goes beyond the moment, shaping the spirit that will carry on.

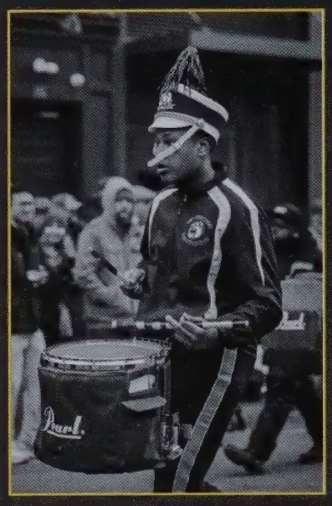
SECTIONS

SECTIONS

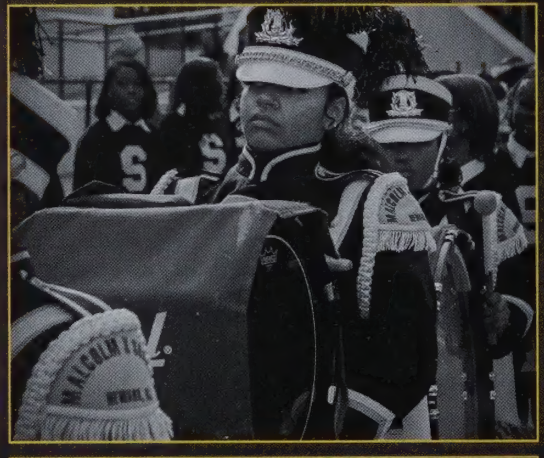
THE BADDEST BAND IN THE LAND

BULLDOGS

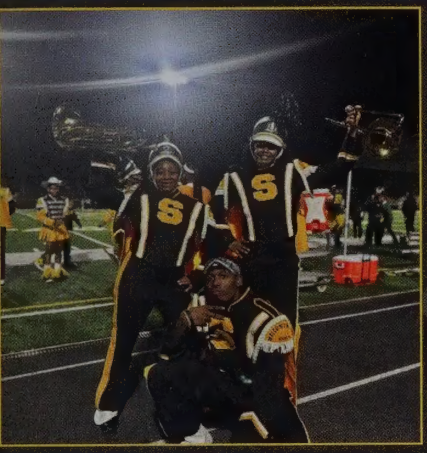
The Malcolm X Shabazz High School Marching Band blends sound, style, and storytelling into every performance. Led by Band Director Rasheed Sheffield, each routine reflects hours of dedication and a shared commitment to excellence in the arts. From the rhythm of the drums to the precision of each formation, the band creates moments that resonate far beyond the field.

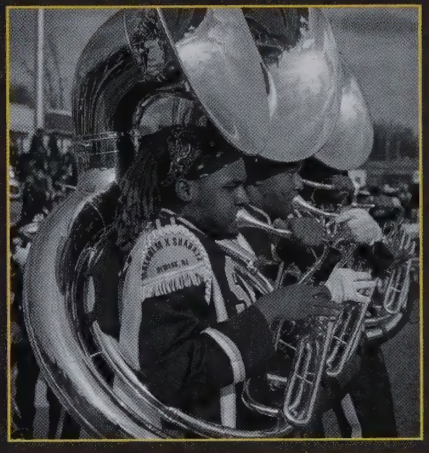

Pearl

J.JSPRINGS



Pearl





BULLDOG ATHLETICS

PRIDE. TEAMWORK. EXCELLENCE.

At Malcolm X Shabazz, athletics is more than competition—it's a commitment to excellence, discipline, and unity. Our student-athletes represent more than just our school; they represent a legacy of strength, resilience, and Bulldog pride.

Together, we train harder, support each other, and strive for greatness—on the field, on the court, and in life.

ALL IN. EVERY PLAY. EVERY DAY.

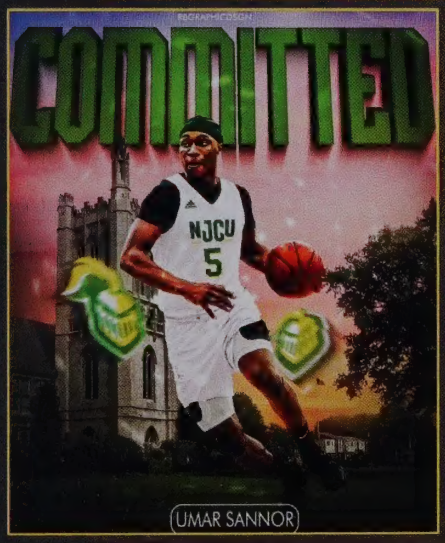
WE ARE ONE. WE ARE BULLDOGS.

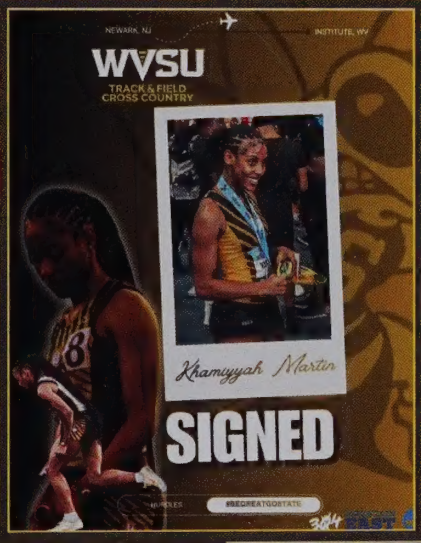
BASEBALL | BASKETBALL | FOOTBALL | TRACK & FIELD | FLAG FOOTBALL | VOLLEYBALL | TENNIS | SOFTBALL

BUILT ON STRENGTH. DRIVEN BY PRIDE.

SHABAZZ BUILT

COLLEGE BOUND



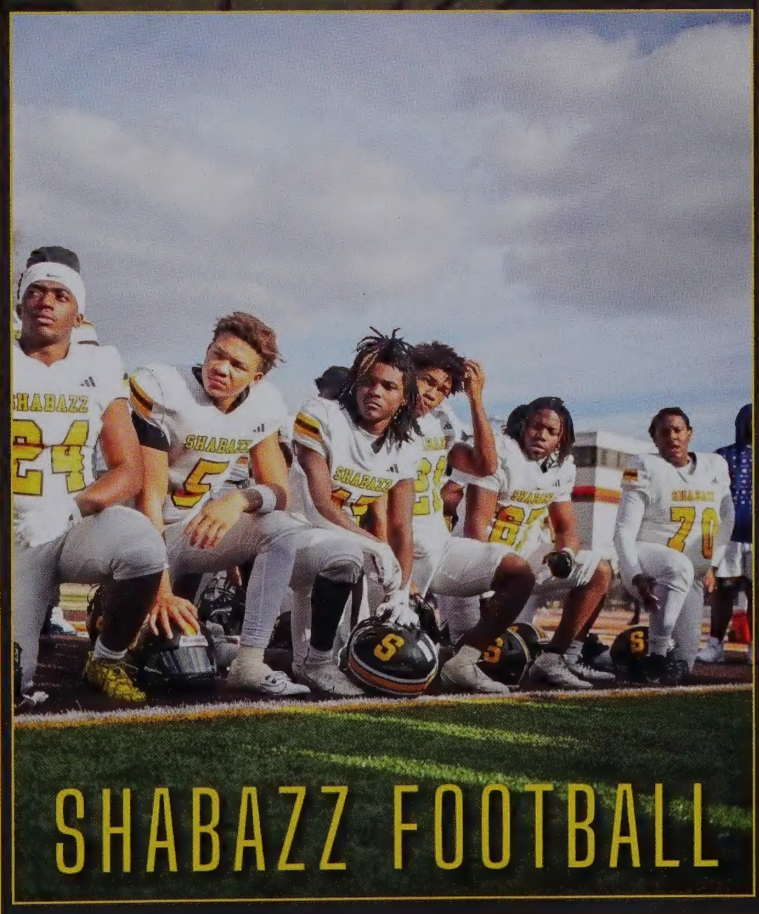


Victory in the air and pride all around–Shabazz players hoist the Soul Bowl trophy after a commanding 20-6 win.

SOUL BOWL GLORY:

PRIDE, POWER, AND PROGRESS

Malcolm X Shabazz High School captured a powerful 20–6 victory in this year's Soul Bowl, reigniting Bulldog pride and school spirit. From the opening whistle, the team showcased determination, discipline, and unity, rising to the occasion in one of the season's most anticipated matchups. The Bulldogs controlled the game on both sides of the ball, delivering a performance that reflected their hard work and commitment. The win energized the entire Shabazz community, bringing students, staff, and alumni together in celebration. More than just a game, the Soul Bowl victory symbolized resilience, growth, and the continued rise of Bulldog excellence.



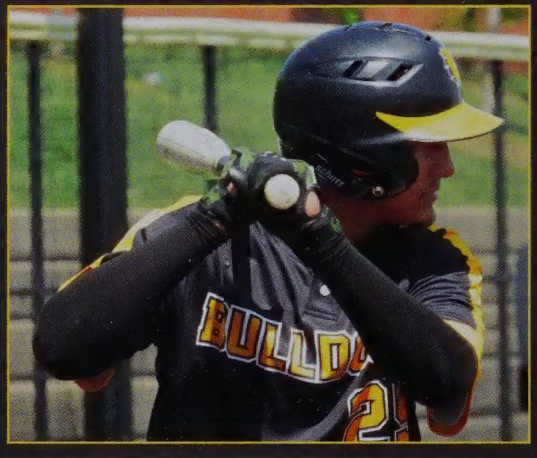
SHABAZZ FOOTBALL

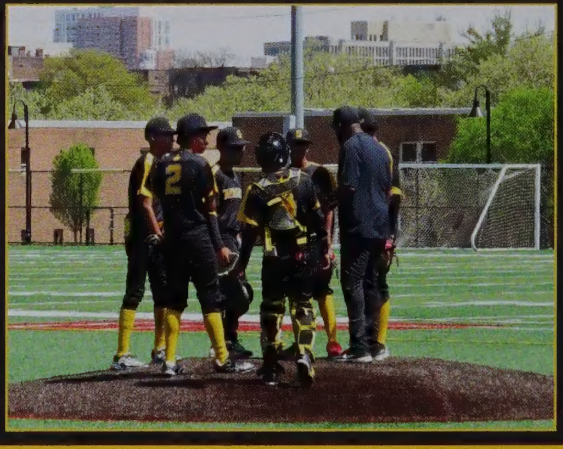
THREE-PEAT COMPLETE: BULLDOGS REIGN AGAIN

Malcolm X Shabazz High School captured its third straight sectional championship with a thrilling 26–16 victory over Madison in the N2G2 final. Trailing early, the Bulldogs rallied with determination and composure, turning momentum in their favor and finishing strong in the second half. Led by Head Coach Nasir Gaines and his staff, the team showcased resilience, discipline, and a championship mindset when it mattered most. The win solidified Shabazz's dominance and added another historic chapter to the program's growing legacy.

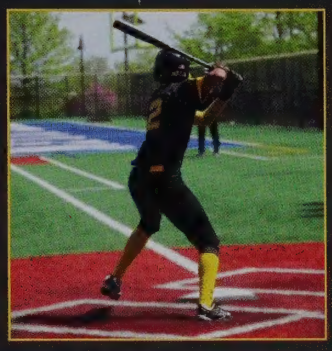
NORTH JERSEY SECTION 2 GROUP 2 CHAMPIONS

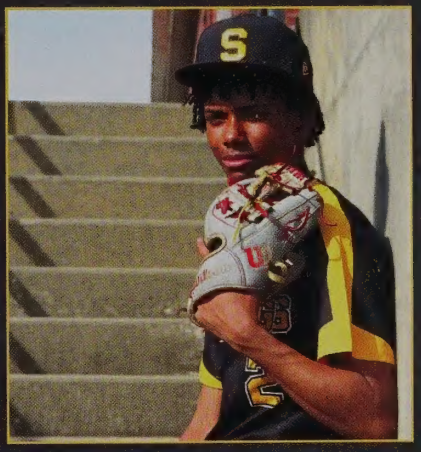
SHABAZZ

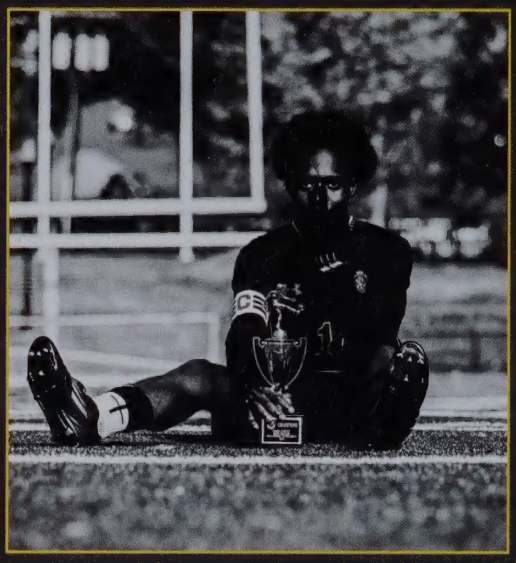


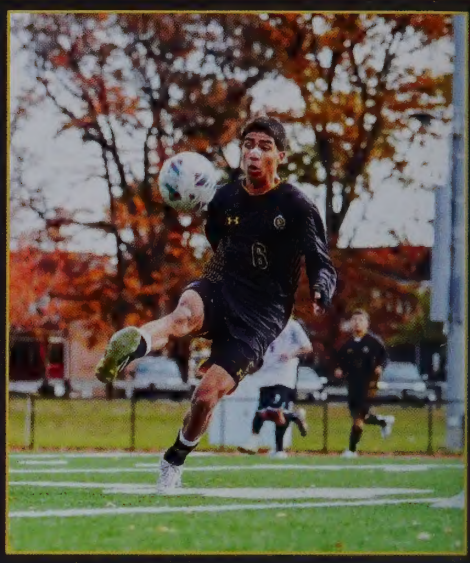


BASEBALL









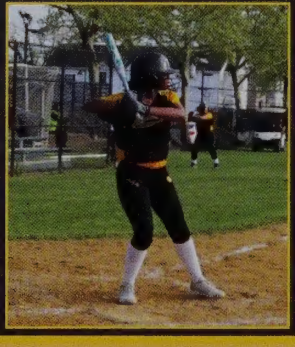
SHABAZZ SOCCER

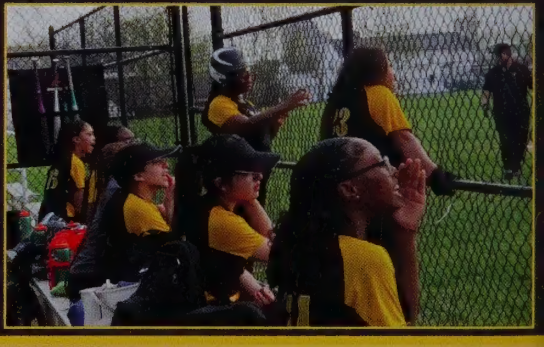
BLACK & GOLD NEVER FOLD

In a thrilling run through the Essex County Invitational, the Bulldogs showed exactly what that motto means. Facing Newark Tech in the championship match, Shabazz battled through a back-and-forth game that pushed into double overtime. Refusing to back down, the team delivered when it mattered most, securing a dramatic 4–3 victory to claim the title. It was a championship defined by grit, resilience, and true Bulldog pride.

ESSEX COUNTY INVITATIONAL CHAMPIONS

LADY BULLDOGS SOFTBALL





SENIORS

SEC

SUPER ESSEX CONFERENCE

SEC INDEPENDENCE CHAMPIONS

MALCOLM X SHABAZZ LADY BULLDOGS

2025

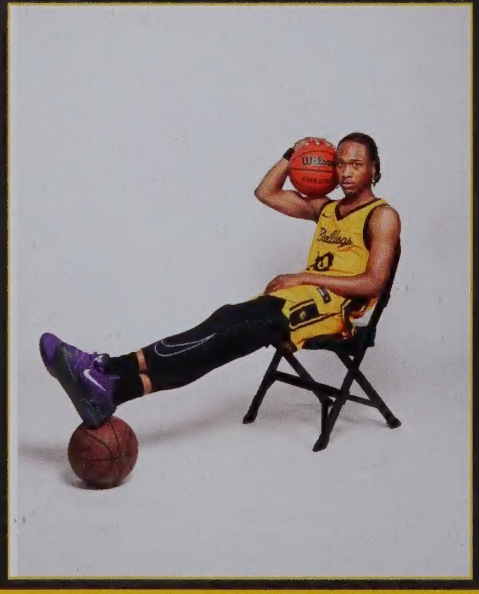
LADY BULLDOGS TENNIS

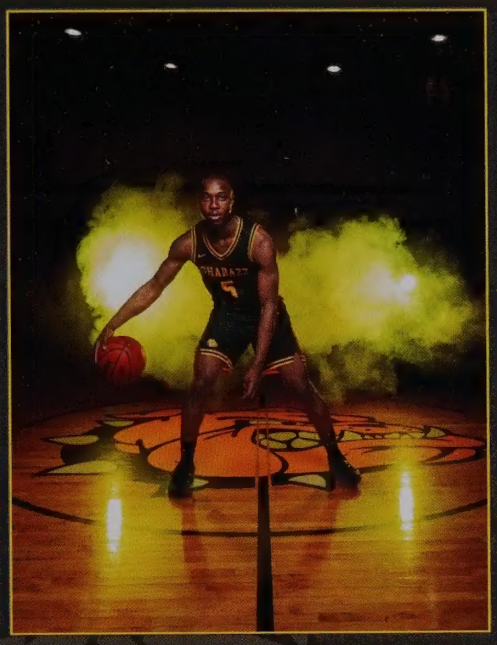
THE SHABAZZ TRACK TEAM

The Malcolm X Shabazz Boys Track & Field team delivered a standout winter season, capturing major championships, earning national recognition, and returning to the prestigious Millrose Games at The Armory in New York City.

Led by Head Coach Hassan Wilson, the Bulldogs dominated across events, securing the Super Essex Conference Championship and Essex County Relay title, while finishing runner-up at the Essex County Individual Championships. As the defending national champions in the 4x400 relay, Shabazz once again qualified for the Millrose Games. The team also earned a Top-5 national ranking in the Shuttle Hurdle Relay for both boys and girls—solidifying their place among the nation's elite.

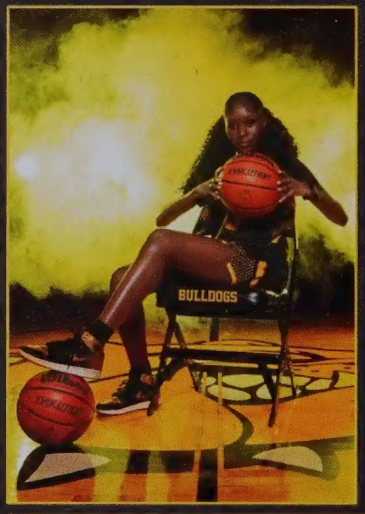
BOYS BASKETBALL

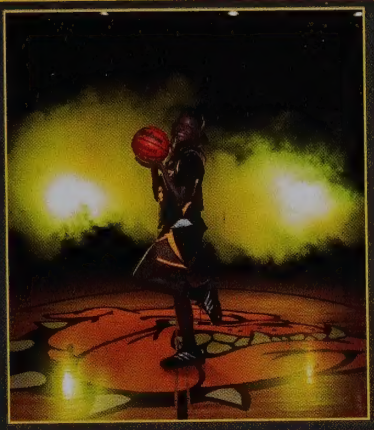


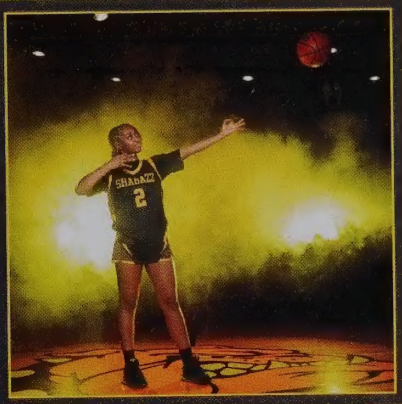


SENIORS

LADY BULLDOGS BASKETBALL

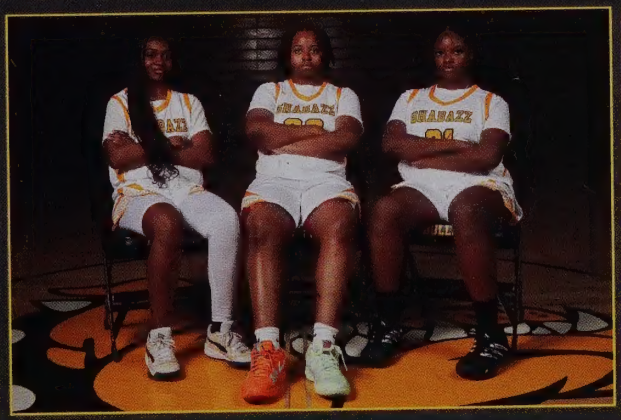


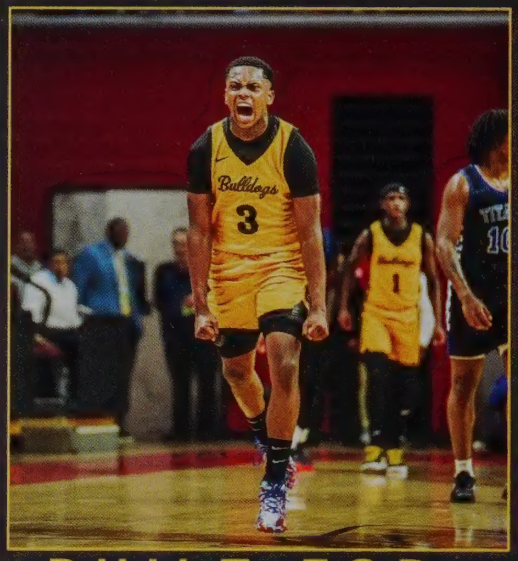


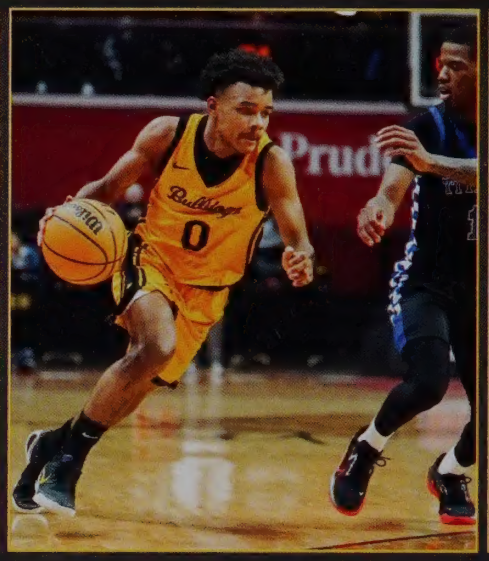


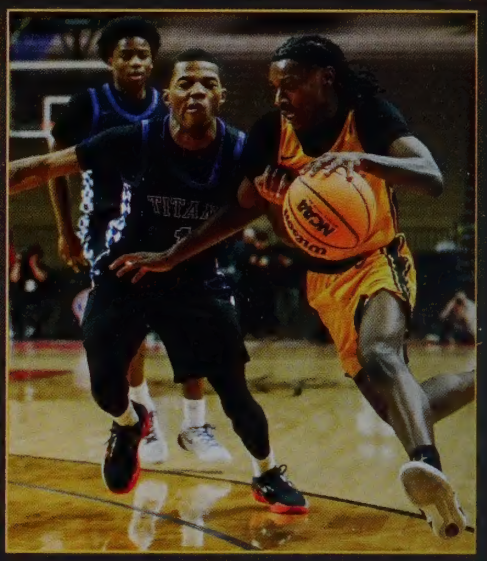
SENIORS

"SHE HOOPS. SHE LEADS. SHE WINS."







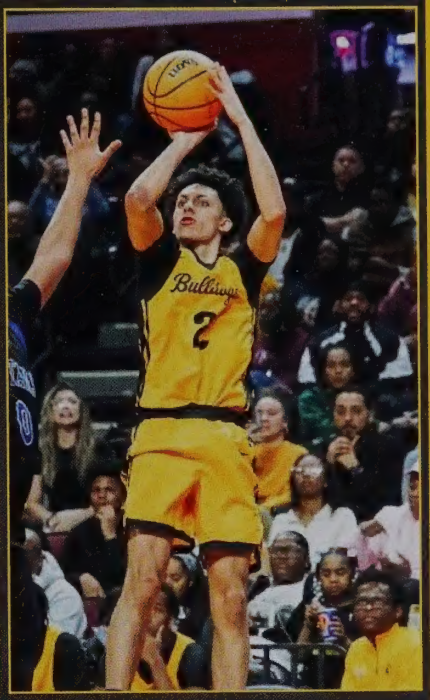


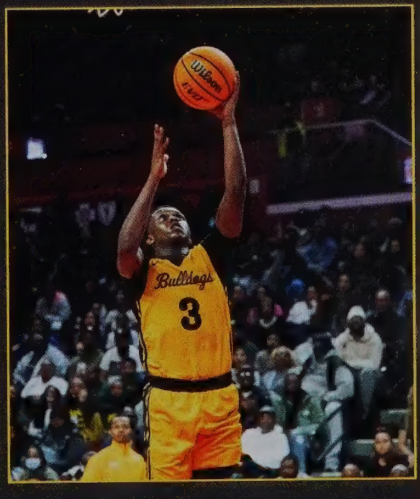
BUILT FOR THE BIG STAGE

Big lights. Big pressure. Big-time performance.

Shabazz stepped into the Group 1 State Final ready and proved they belonged from the opening tip. In a high-energy battle against Thrive Charter, the Bulldogs stayed composed, made clutch plays, and locked in when it mattered most. Every run was answered. Every moment was owned.

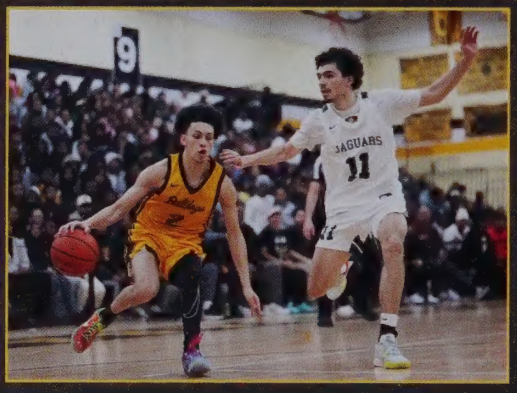
With the game on the line, Shabazz didn't flinch—they finished. Fueled by grit, chemistry, and that undeniable Bulldog mentality, they held the line and closed it out in style. When the stage got bigger, so did they. And when it was all said and done, one thing was clear: Shabazz wasn't just in the moment they were built for it.





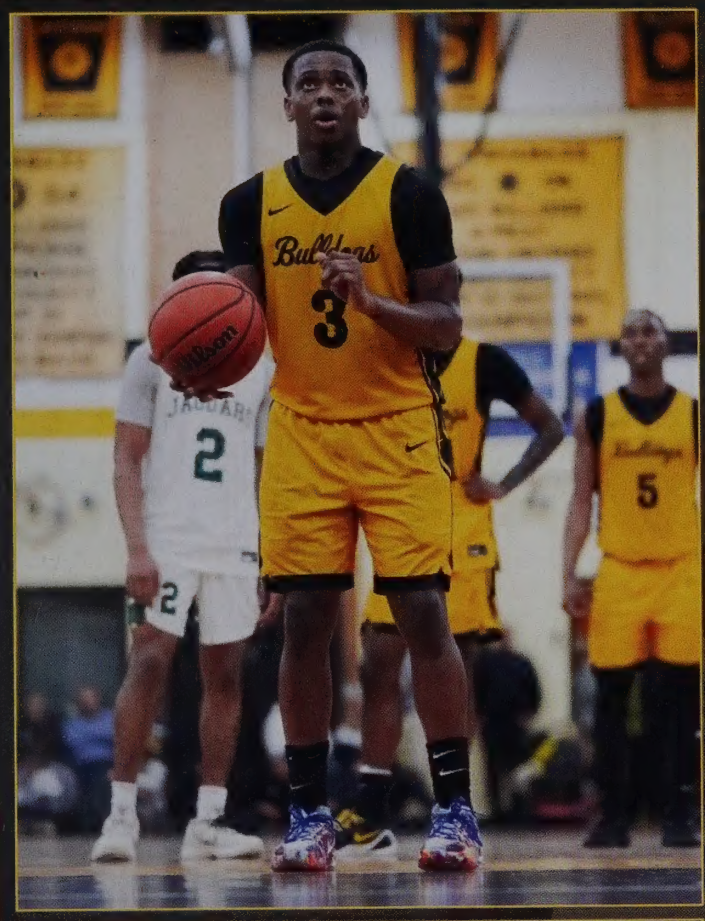
NJSIAA GROUP 1 CHAMPIONS

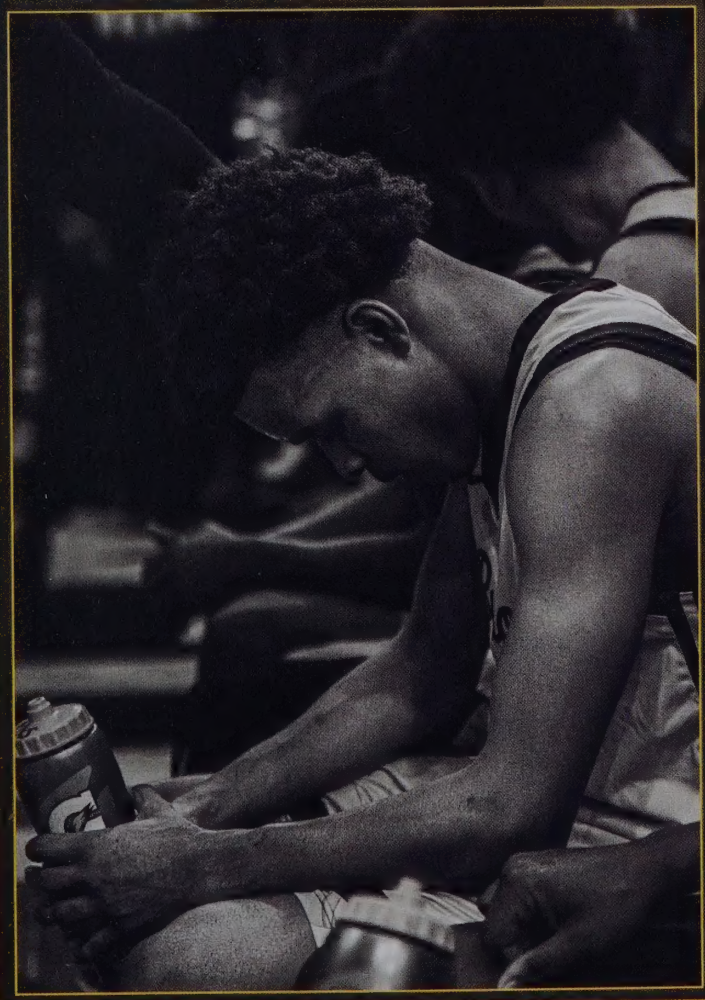
NORTH II GROUP 1 CHAMPIONS



A QUARTER FOR THE AGES

Down at halftime and searching for momentum, the Bulldogs turned to heart—and one unforgettable performance. Anthony Blackmon erupted for 23 points in the third quarter, flipping the game and igniting a run that defined the night. What started as a deficit quickly turned into dominance as Shabazz seized control and never looked back. Fueled by resilience, energy, and belief, the Bulldogs completed the comeback to capture the North II Group 1 title. It wasn't just a win—it was a statement. In a game that demanded everything, Shabazz delivered when it mattered most, proving that champions aren't just crowned they rise.





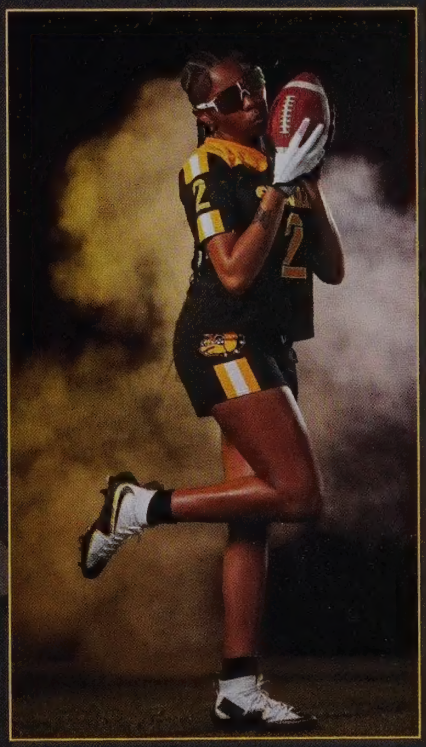
ROAD TO THE TITLE

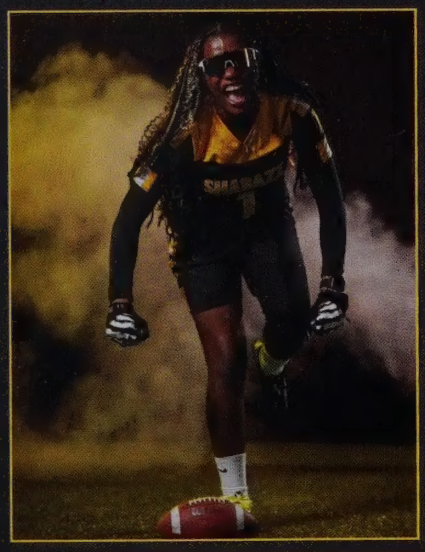
LADY BULLDOGS FLAG FOOTBALL

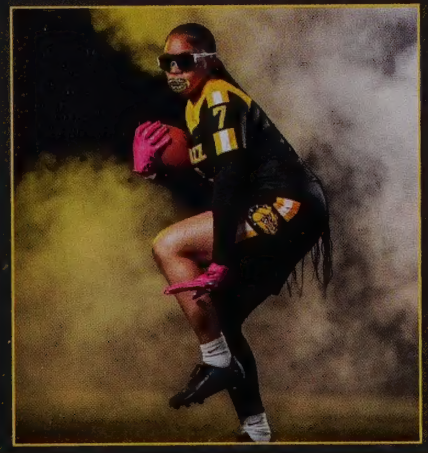
SHABAZZ
10

SHABAZZ
7

SHABAZZ
8
7

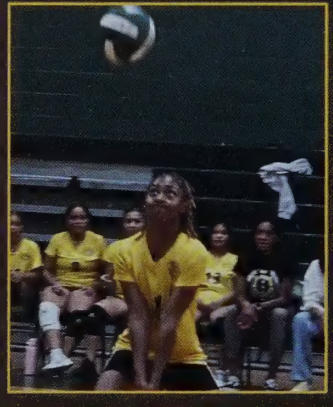






BOYS VOLLEYBALL

LADY BULLDOGS VOLLEYBALL



THE LEGACY CONTINUES

As these pages close. your story is only just beginning. The moments captured here are more than memories. They are proof of your growth. your resilience. and the impact you have made within these halls

The Class of 2026 leaves behind a legacy defined by strength. unity. and optimism. You have faced challenges with courage. celebrated victories with pride. and created a foundation that will continue to inspire those who follow.

Wherever life takes you next. carry the spirit of Malcolm X Shabazz High School with you. Lead with purpose. Move with confidence. And never forget the power you hold to shape your own future.

"Education is the passport to the future. for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." — Malcolm X

Once a Bulldog. always a Bulldog.

Congratulations Class of 2026

Signatures

Signatures

Lifetouch